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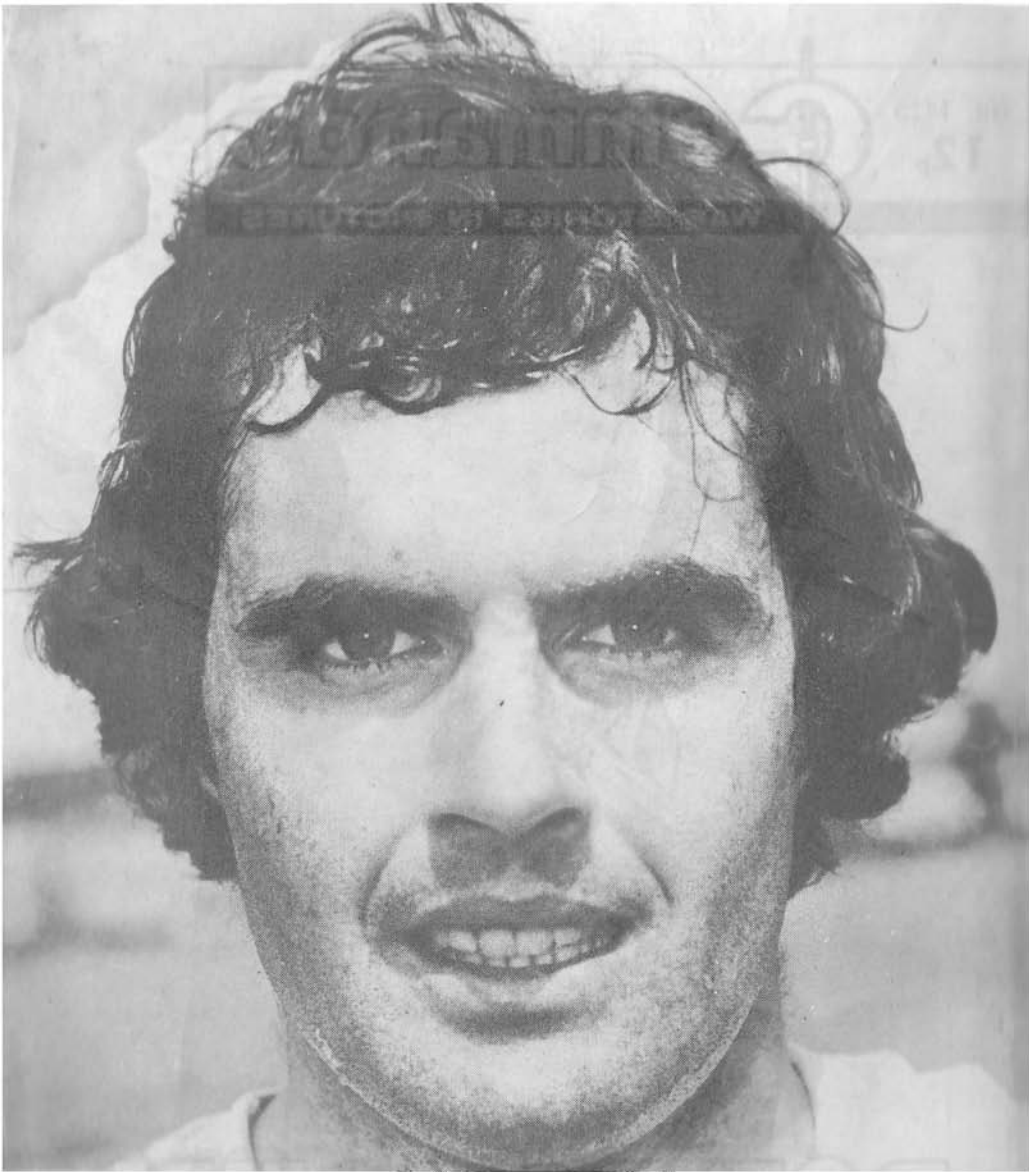
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# Commando

WAR STORIES IN PICTURES

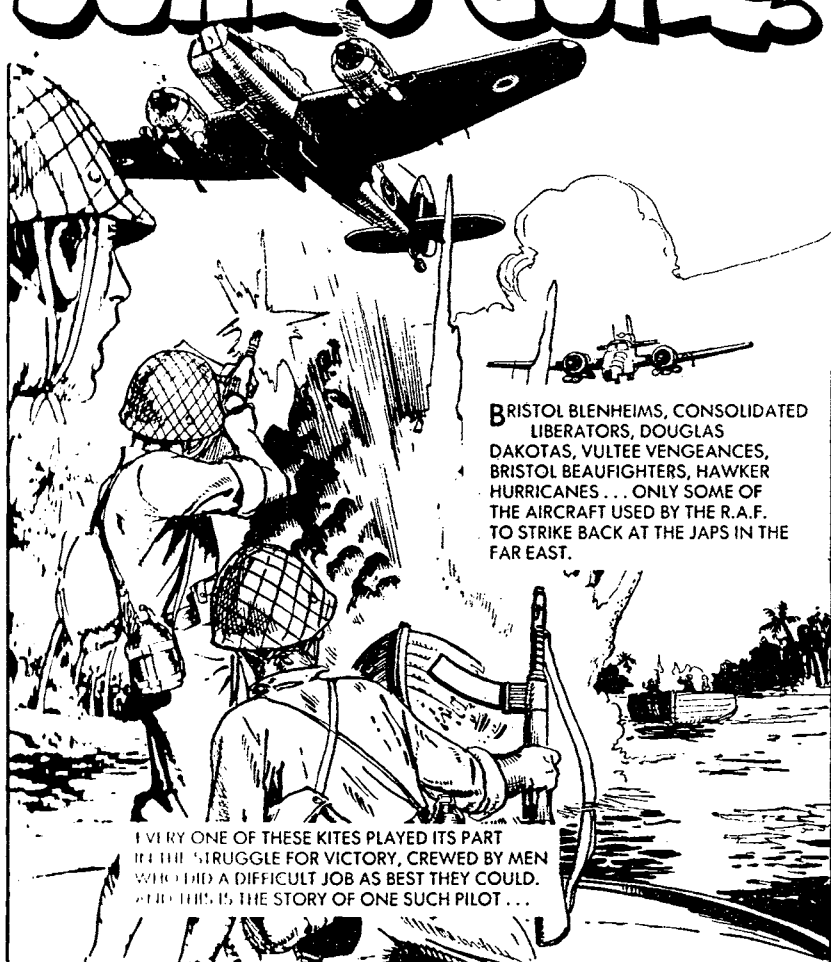


**BOMBS GONE!**



Stars of Cricket—Bruce Edgar

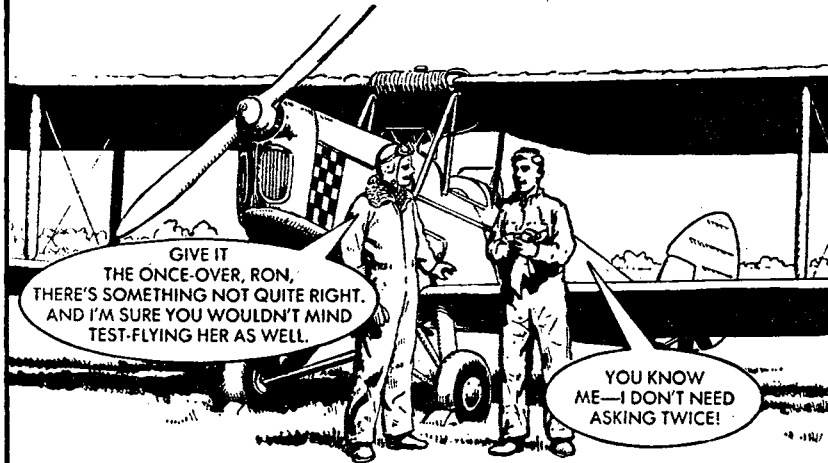
# BOMBS GONE!



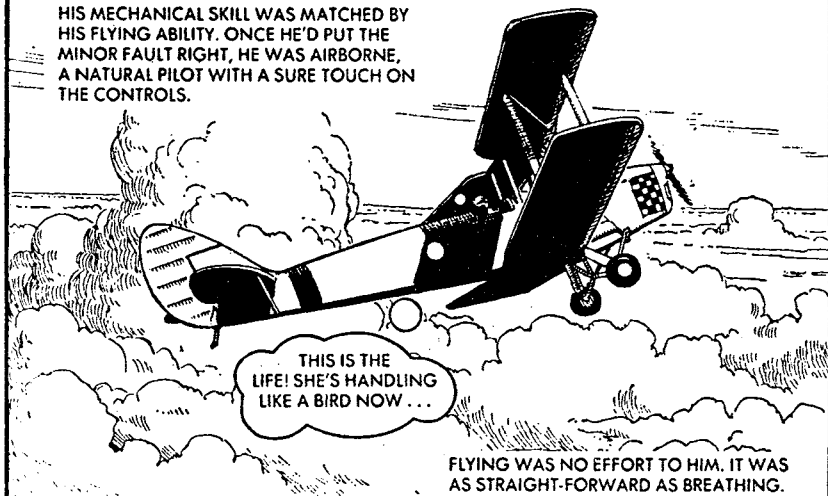
**B** RISTOL BIENHEIMS, CONSOLIDATED  
LIBERATORS, DOUGLAS  
DAKOTAS, VULTEE VENGEANCES,  
BRISTOL BEAUFIGHTERS, HAWKER  
HURRICANES . . . ONLY SOME OF  
THE AIRCRAFT USED BY THE R.A.F.  
TO STRIKE BACK AT THE JAPS IN THE  
FAR EAST.

EVERY ONE OF THESE KITES PLAYED ITS PART  
IN THE STRUGGLE FOR VICTORY, CREWED BY MEN  
WHO DID A DIFFICULT JOB AS BEST THEY COULD.  
AND THIS IS THE STORY OF ONE SUCH PILOT . . .

BEFORE THE WAR, RON ELLIOT HAD ONLY ONE INTEREST IN LIFE—FLYING. HE WORKED AS A MECHANIC-CUM-HANDYMAN ON A SMALL AIRFIELD IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND AND WAS WELL LIKED AND TRUSTED BY THE MEMBERS.



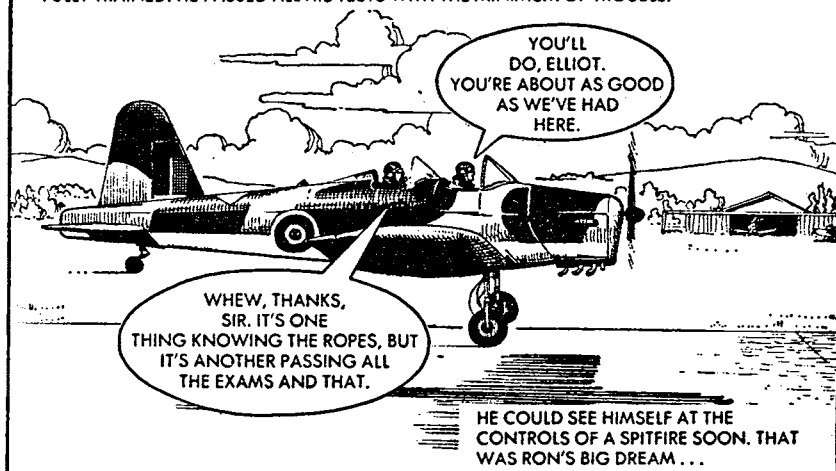
HIS MECHANICAL SKILL WAS MATCHED BY HIS FLYING ABILITY. ONCE HE'D PUT THE MINOR FAULT RIGHT, HE WAS AIRBORNE, A NATURAL PILOT WITH A SURE TOUCH ON THE CONTROLS.



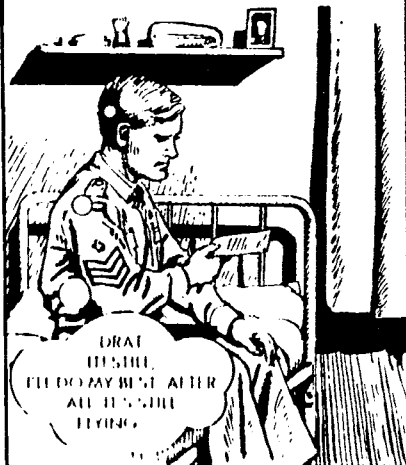
HE HEADED BACK TO THE AIRFIELD, SKIMMING LOW OVER SOME HEDGES, SOARING UP HIGH AGAIN—IN COMPLETE COMMAND ALL THE TIME. THE LOCALS WERE WELL USED TO HIS DISPLAYS.



RON VOLUNTEERED IMMEDIATELY, BUT A SUDDEN BOUT OF ILLNESS KEPT HIM OUT OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE WAR, AND THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN WAS OVER BY THE TIME HE WAS FULLY TRAINED. HE PASSED ALL HIS TESTS WITH THE MINIMUM OF TROUBLE.



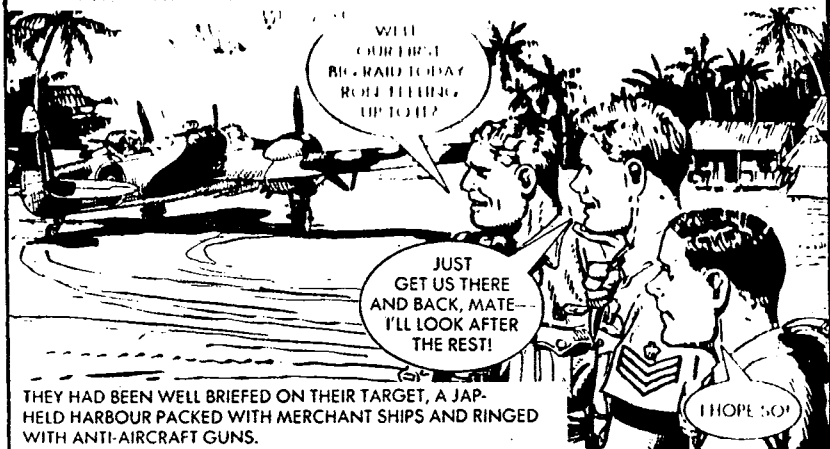
BUT IT WASN'T TO BE. HE WAS POSTED TO BOMBERS COMMAND TO TRAIN ON BOMBERS.



THEN HIS POSTING CAME THROUGH - TO THE FAR EAST. AND BY THE TIME HE REACHED THE BASE IN BURMA, AS A FLIGHT-SERGEANT, HE WAS READY TO FLY ANYTHING.



HE SETTLED IN QUICKLY AND SOON HAD THE HANG OF THINGS. HIS CREW, BOTH SERGEANTS, WERE NEW TO IT ALL AS WELL. AND THEY SOON BECAME A GOOD TEAM - CURRIE BOB REID AS HIS NAVIGATOR AND THE QUIET, THOUGHTFUL AL FLOYD AS HIS GUNNER. WIRELESS OPERATOR.



IT WASN'T EASY BATTLING THROUGH THE HEAVY FLAK, BUT RON AND THE OTHER PILOTS PERSEVERED AND THEIR BOMBS DID A FAIR BIT OF DAMAGE.

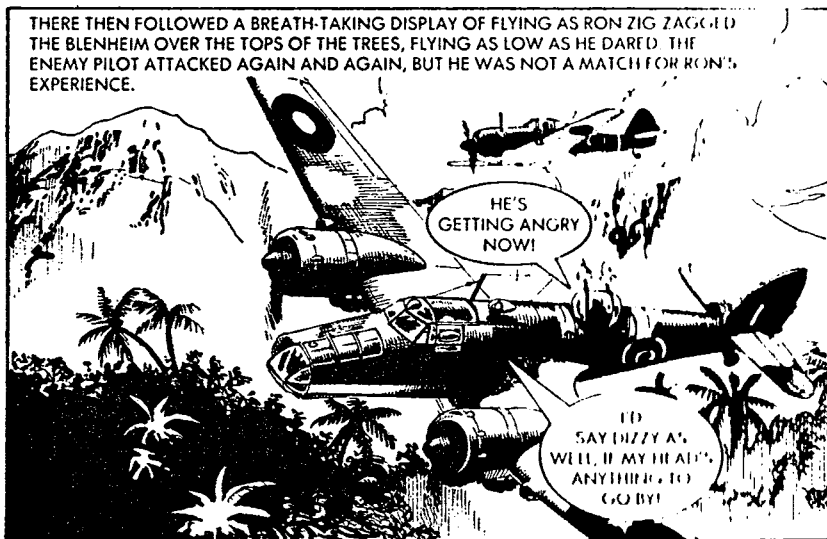
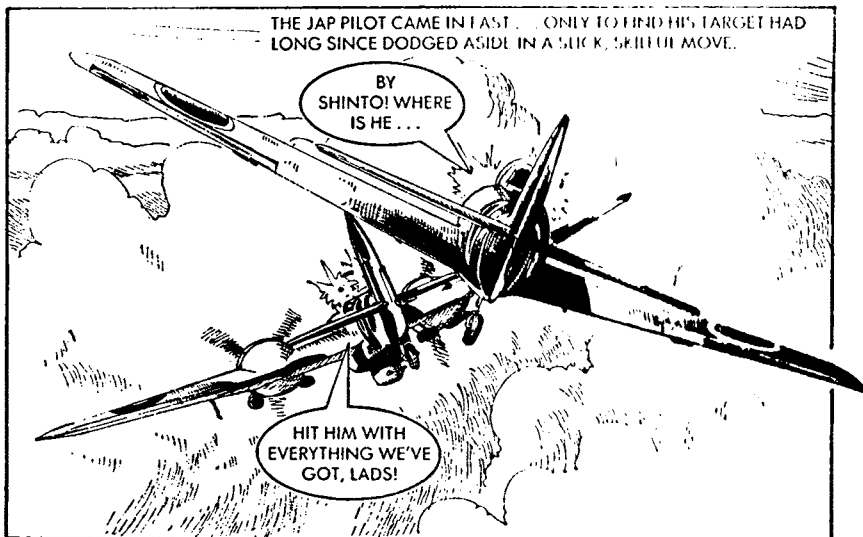


IN ALL THE CONFUSION, RON'S AIRCRAFT GOT SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS ON THE WAY BACK TO BASE. NICK HAD THEIR COURSE WELL PLOTTED, BUT THERE WAS SOON ANOTHER DANGER TO CONTEND WITH AS A PATROLLING JAP FIGHTER CAME DIVING THEIR WAY.

BANDIT  
ASTERN, SKIPPER,  
IT'S AN OSCAR...

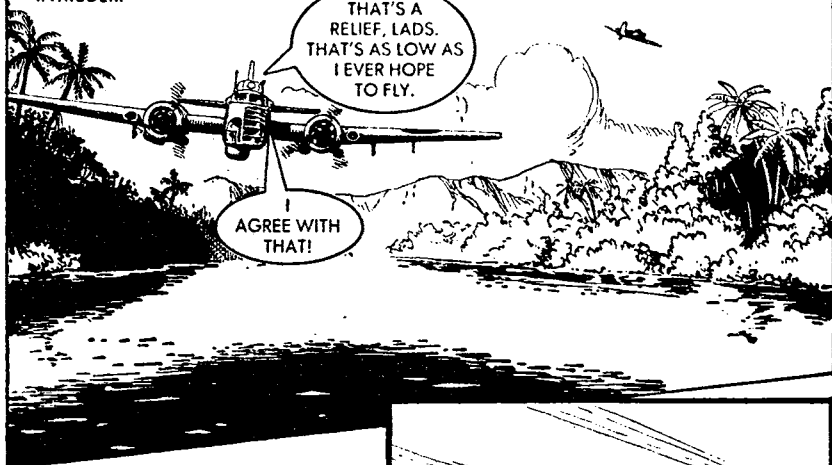
HOLD TIGHT,  
I'LL SEE WHAT  
I CAN DO.

CODE-NAMED "OSCAR" BY THE ALLIES, THE NAKAJIMA K143 HAYABUSA WAS A FAST, MANOEUVRABLE FIGHTER. ITS JAPANESE NAME MEANT "PEREGRINE FALCON" AND THE PILOT OF THIS ONE WAS CLEARLY OUT FOR A KILL.





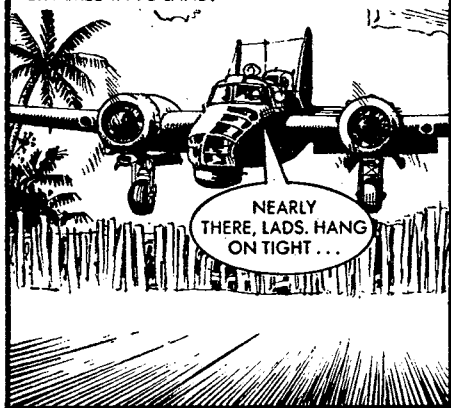
THE SKILL AND TACTICS USED BY RON SAVED THEIR NECKS, AND THE DANGER WAS SOON GONE WHEN TWO SPITFIRES CAME TO THE BOMBER'S AID, CHASING OFF THE INTRUDER.



BUT THEY HADN'T COME THROUGH IT ALL UNSCATHED. ONE ENGINE BEGAN TO MIS-FIRE, AND RON KNEW AT ONCE THAT IT MEANT TROUBLE.



FLYING LOW AND STRAIGHT, THEY MADE IT BACK TO BASE IN THE FASTEST POSSIBLE TIME AND SKIMMED IN TO LAND.



THE BLENHEIM'S RETURN COINCIDED WITH THE ARRIVAL OF REG PRIOR, THE NEW SQUADRON-LEADER WHO WAS TAKING OVER FROM THE PRESENT ONE WHO HAD BEEN INJURED. THE OTHER PILOTS PRESENT GRINNED WITH RELIEF TO SEE RON'S AIRCRAFT BUT PRIOR WASN'T EXACTLY IMPRESSED BY THE LOW, UNORTHODOX APPROACH.



AS RON AND HIS CREW CLIMBED OUT UNHURT TO INSPECT THEIR KILL AND SHARE A JOKE, THE NEW C.O. AND THE OTHER PILOTS WERE HEADING THEIR WAY UNSEEN.



THEY TURNED ROUND TO FACE THEIR NEW C.O., AND AFTER INTRODUCTIONS HAD BEEN MADE, HE COLDLY AND BRUSQUELY LECTURED RON IN FRONT OF ALL THE OTHERS.

I'M GLAD YOU GOT BACK, BUT I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU FLY SO LOW AGAIN, OR I'LL PERSONALLY GROUND YOU FOR LIFE!

BUT, SIR ...

PRIOR WASN'T LISTENING. HE WAS ALREADY TURNING AWAY TO CHECK OVER HIS NEW COMMAND.

RON WAS FURIOUS AND COULD HARDLY BELIEVE IT, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD DO ABOUT IT.

THE  
CHEEK OF IT!  
I COULD ...

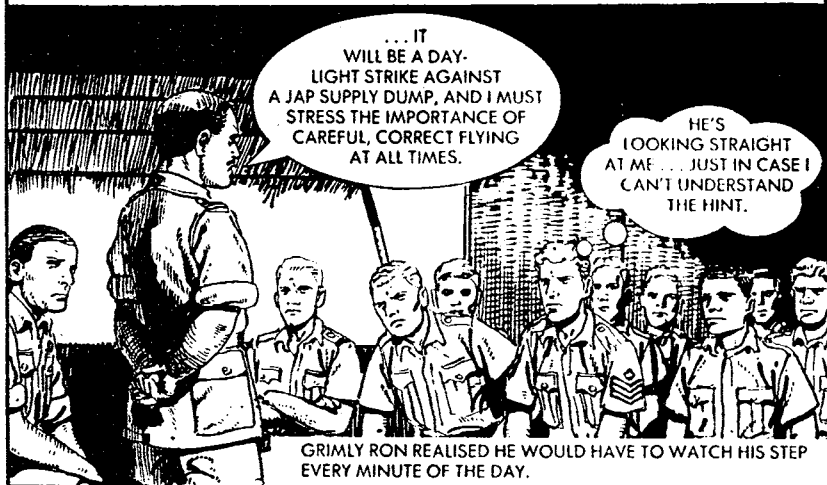
FORGET  
IT, SKIPPER. HE'S  
PROBABLY ONLY SHOWING  
WHO'S THE BOSS  
AROUND HERE NOW.

BUT THINGS DIDN'T IMPROVE. SOON THEY ALL KNEW PRIOR WAS A RUTHLESS STICKLER FOR DISCIPLINE WHO LET NOTHING GO.

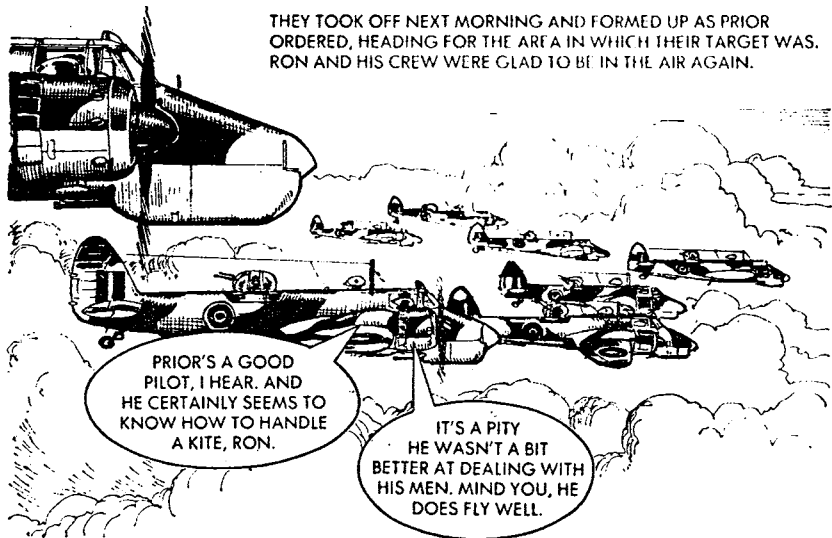
... HE  
REALLY TORE  
A STRIP OFF ME. AND  
ALL BECAUSE OF  
MY DUSTY SHOES!

HE'S A  
LUNATIC!


ONCE PRIOR HAD SETTLED THINGS ALMOST TO HIS SATISFACTION IN AND AROUND THE BASE, HE BRIEFED THEM FOR THE FIRST RAID WHICH HE WAS TO LEAD.



THEY TOOK OFF NEXT MORNING AND FORMED UP AS PRIOR ORDERED, HEADING FOR THE AREA IN WHICH THEIR TARGET WAS. RON AND HIS CREW WERE GLAD TO BE IN THE AIR AGAIN.




A SPITFIRE SWEEP WAS KEEPING THE JAP FIGHTERS BUSY AND THE BLENHEIMS REACHED THEIR TARGET WITH NO TROUBLE. PRIOR IMMEDIATELY RAPPED OUT ORDERS AS THEY BANKED TO ATTACK—



I'LL  
LEAD THE WAY IN.  
REMEMBER YOUR ORDERS AS  
REGARDS THE SEQUENCE  
OF ATTACK...

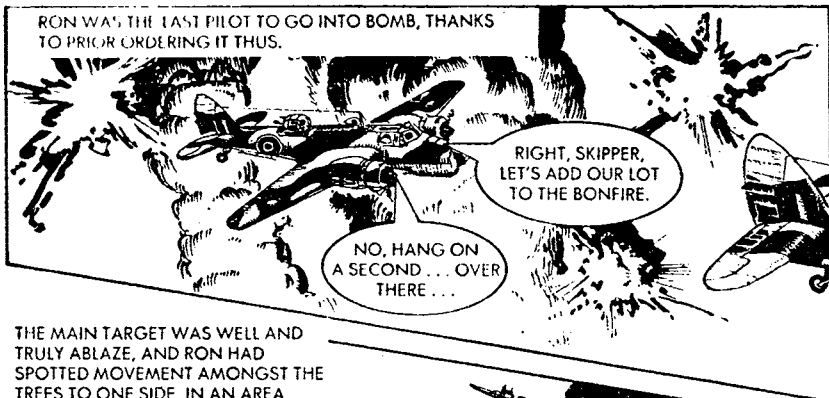
THE FIRST BOMB LOADS FELL SLAP BANG ON  
TARGET. THE DUMP WAS SOON A BLAZING  
BONFIRE AS THE BLENHEIMS POUNDED THE AREA.



AIEEE—  
WHERE ARE OUR  
FIGHTERS?

THE JAPS HAD BEEN CAUGHT NAPPING,  
AND WERE PAYING DEARLY.

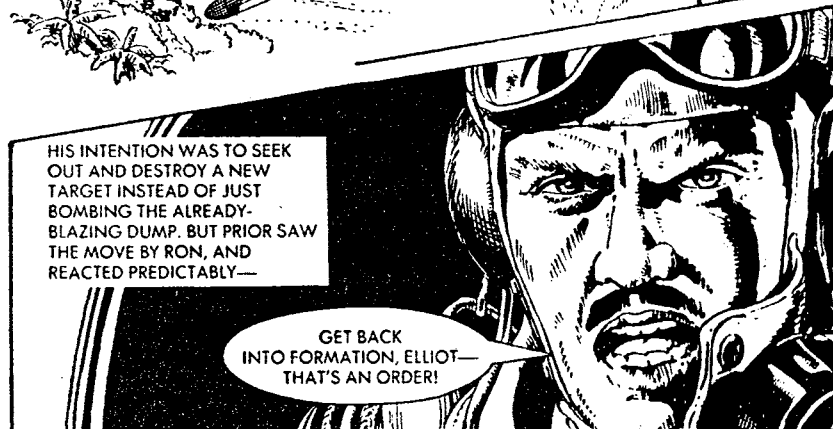
RON WAS THE LAST PILOT TO GO INTO BOMB, THANKS TO PRIOR ORDERING IT THUS.



THE MAIN TARGET WAS WELL AND TRULY ABLAZE, AND RON HAD SPOTTED MOVEMENT AMONGST THE TREES TO ONE SIDE, IN AN AREA UNTOUCHED SO FAR.



HIS INTENTION WAS TO SEEK OUT AND DESTROY A NEW TARGET INSTEAD OF JUST BOMBING THE ALREADY-BLAZING DUMP. BUT PRIOR SAW THE MOVE BY RON, AND REACTED PREDICTABLY—



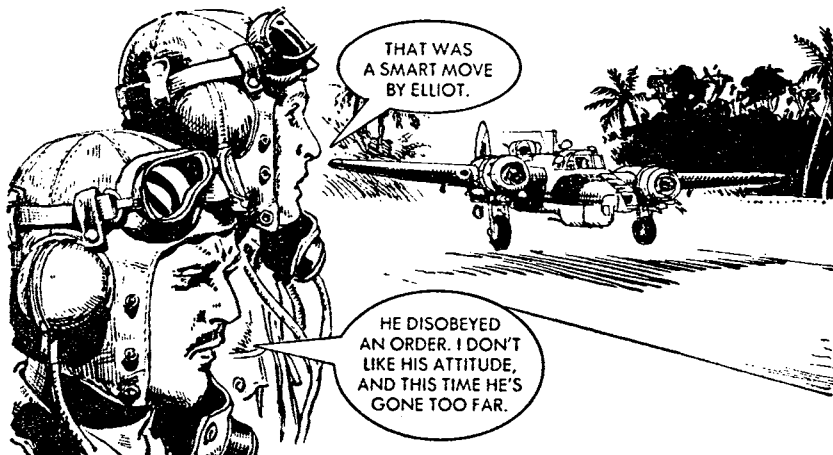
RON HEARD PRIOR BUT HE KEPT ON GOING, ORDERING THE BOMBS TO BE RELEASED OVER WHAT WAS STILL A MYSTERY TARGET TO HIS CREW, BUT RON WAS CERTAIN ENOUGH TO RISK HIS C.O.'S WRATH -



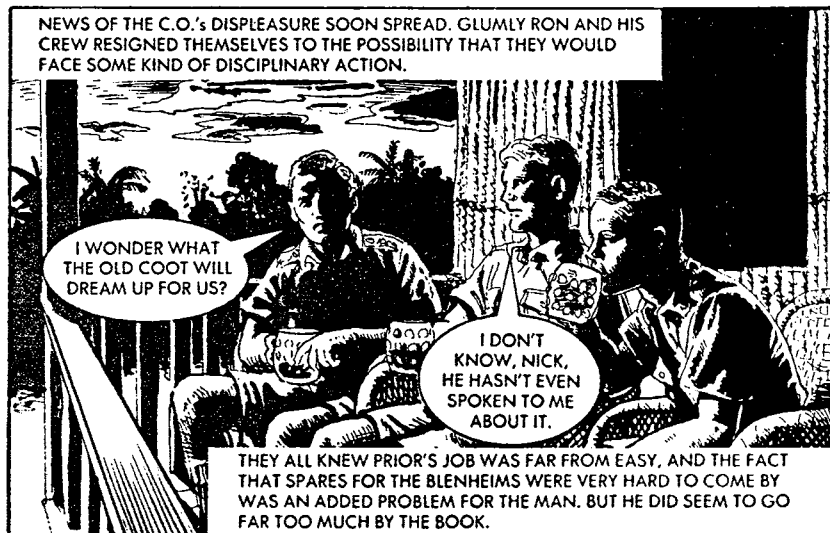
AND WHEN THE EXPLOSIONS CAME, RON'S TARGET WAS CLEAR FOR ALL TO SEE. HE HAD SPOTTED SOME TANKS MANOEUVRING INTO BETTER COVER AMONG TREES AND IT WAS ON THEM HE'D DROPPED THE BOMB-LOAD.



THE RETURN TO BASE WAS UNEVENTFUL, BUT PRIOR WAS STILL FURIOUS AT RON FOR DISOBEYING ORDERS. THE FACT THAT ALL THE OTHER PILOTS WERE FULL OF PRAISE FOR HIM DIDN'T HELP.

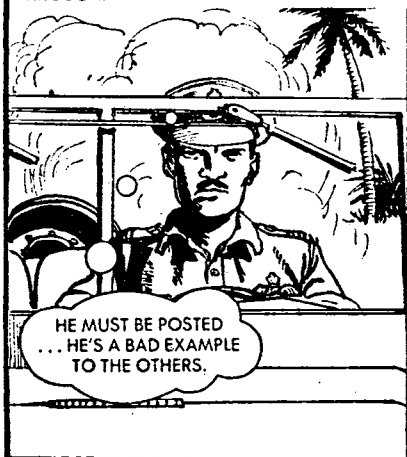


NEWS OF THE C.O.'S DISPLEASURE SOON SPREAD. GLUMLY RON AND HIS CREW RESIGNED THEMSELVES TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY WOULD FACE SOME KIND OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION.

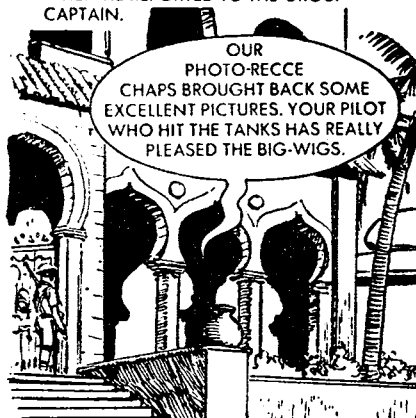




IN FACT, NEXT DAY PRIOR WAS ON HIS WAY TO H.Q. HE'D ALREADY SENT THEM A REPORT OF RON'S ACTION AND NOW HE WANTED TO SEE HIS RECOMMENDATION CARRIED THROUGH.



BUT THE TOP BRASS AT H.Q. DIDN'T SEE IT THAT WAY, MUCH TO PRIOR'S AMAZEMENT WHEN HE REPORTED TO THE GROUP CAPTAIN.



THE OUTCOME OF THE SITUATION WAS THAT THE H.Q. STAFF, ALTHOUGH UNDERSTANDING PRIOR'S PROBLEM, WERE DELIGHTED AT RON'S SHOW OF INITIATIVE AND SUCCESS.



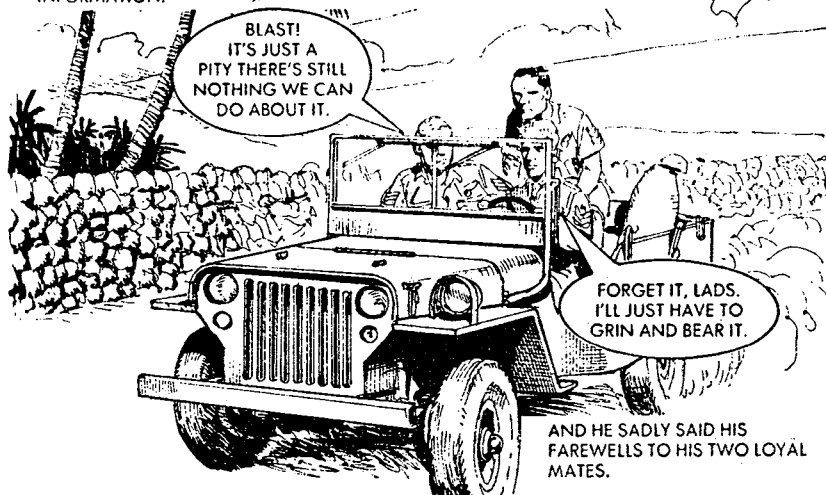
PRIOR KNEW BETTER THAN TO ARGUE THE POINT, HE WITHDREW GRACEFULLY, BUT HE STILL HAD A CARD UP HIS SLEEVE. HE WENT TO LOOK UP AN OLD PAL FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF WHO OWED HIM A FEW FAVOURS, AND HE HAD A VERY PLAUSIBLE STORY TO TELL.



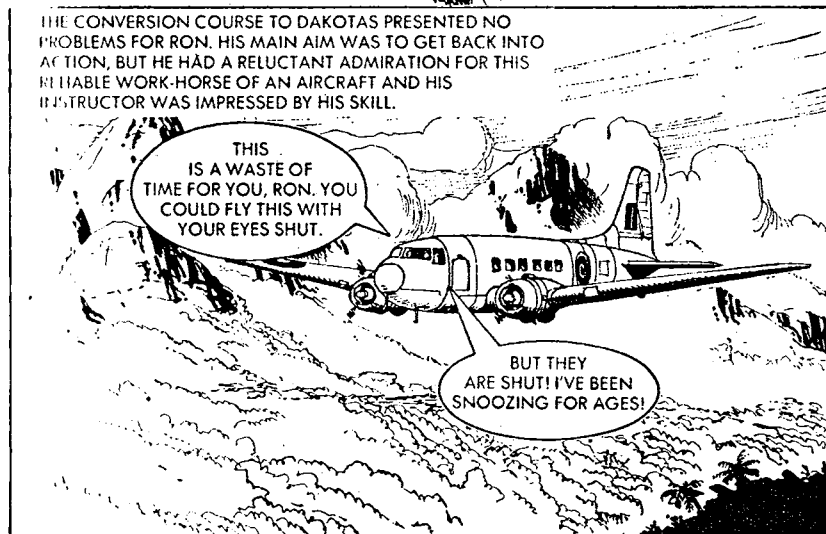
AND SO STRINGS WERE PULLED AND WITHIN THE MONTH, RON WAS AMAZED TO LEARN FROM A SATISFIED PRIOR THAT HE WAS TO BE POSTED TO TRANSPORT COMMAND.



BUT THE SORT OF MOVE PULLED BY PRIOR COULD NEVER STAY A SECRET FOR LONG. A PAL OF NICK'S AT H.Q. SOON HEARD ABOUT IT AND PASSED ON THE INFORMATION.



THE CONVERSION COURSE TO DAKOTAS PRESENTED NO PROBLEMS FOR RON. HIS MAIN AIM WAS TO GET BACK INTO ACTION, BUT HE HAD A RELUCTANT ADMIRATION FOR THIS RELIABLE WORK-HORSE OF AN AIRCRAFT AND HIS INSTRUCTOR WAS IMPRESSED BY HIS SKILL.



HE GRUDGINGLY SETTLED IN TO WHAT HE SAW AS THE BORING, REPETITIVE LIFE AT A NEW BASE. BUT ANOTHER PILOT NOW ON DAKOTAS, FLYING OFFICER SAM ROGER, HAD ALSO FLOWN BLENHEIMS IN ACTION AND HE AND RON HAD A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.



BUT THERE WAS NO DENYING THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR PRESENT TASK, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT CAME TO DROPPING SUPPLIES TO UNITS OPERATING BEHIND THE JAP LINES. RON AND SAM WERE TWO PILOTS WHO COULD BE RELIED UPON COMPLETELY TO GET THROUGH REGARDLESS OF THE WEATHER.



THEIR ABILITY WON THEM PRAISE—AND ALSO STERN WARNINGS, FOR NEITHER RON NOR SAM WERE THE TYPE WHO PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO THE RULE BOOK WHEN THEY THOUGHT IT GOT IN THEIR WAY. AND THEIR SQUADRON-LEADER KNEW THIS ONLY TOO WELL—

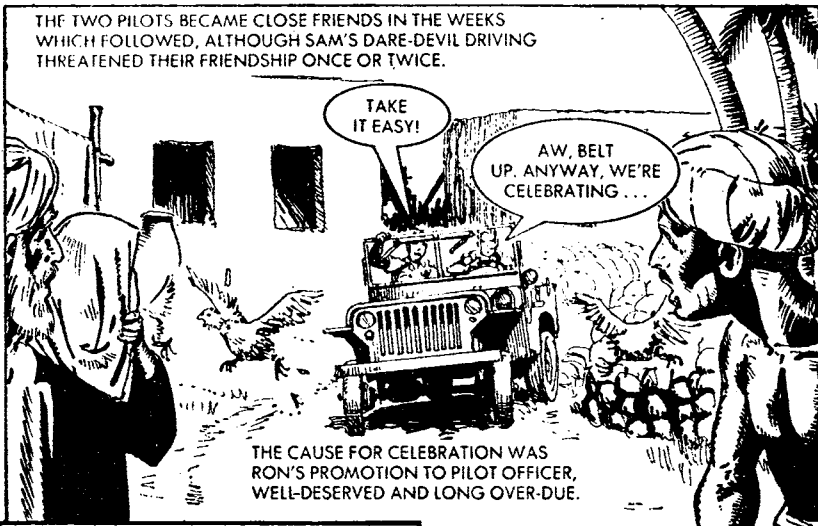
• YOU WERE ORDERED TO TURN BACK BECAUSE THE WEATHER WAS SO FOUL, BUT YOU CARRIED ON. GROUP H.Q. AREN'T VERY HAPPY...

SORRY, SKIPPER, BUT RADIO RECEPTION WAS LOUSY.

THE SQUADRON-LEADER WASN'T GOING TO FALL FOR THAT EXCUSE THOUGH. HE TRIED TO KEEP HIS FACE STRAIGHT AS HE CONTINUED—

RUBBISH!  
ANYWAY, GROUP ARE NOW QUITE HAPPY. SOME ARMY BIG-WIG WAS FULL OF PRAISE FOR YOUR EFFORTS AND TOLD THEM SO.

YOU KNOW US, SKIPPER, WE DO OUR BEST.



SAM LAUGHED. RON KNEW HE WAS UP TO SOMETHING, BUT SAM WOULDN'T SAY WHAT.



THEY WEREN'T FLYING THAT DAY AND SAM DISAPPEARED ON HIS OWN AND NOBODY KNEW WHERE HE'D GONE. BUT HE FOUND RON LATER, DOWN AT THE TOWN BAZAAR.



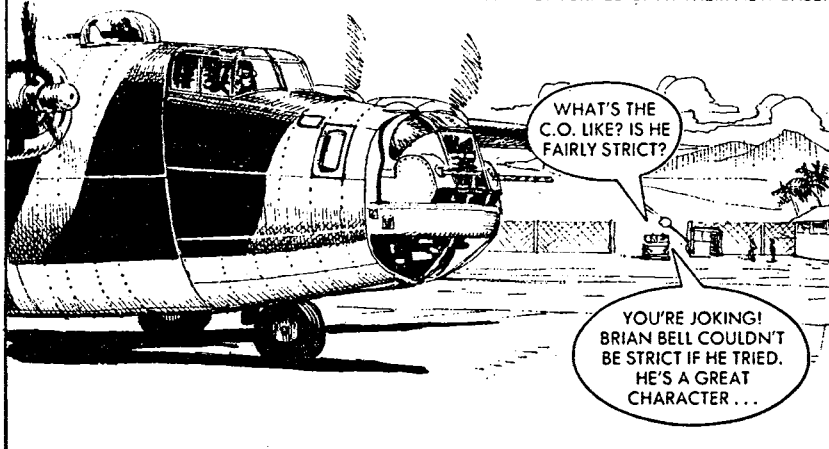
IT APPEARED THAT SAM'S EX-C.O. HAD BEEN KEEN TO GET HIM BACK WITH THE SQUADRON AND HAD ENOUGH PULL AND INFLUENCE TO WANGLE IT.

IT WAS GOOD NEWS FOR SAM, BUT IT ONLY DEEPENED RON'S GLOOM. HE PUT A BRAVE FACE ON IT, MUSTERING A WEAK SMILE FOR HIS FRIEND'S BENEFIT.

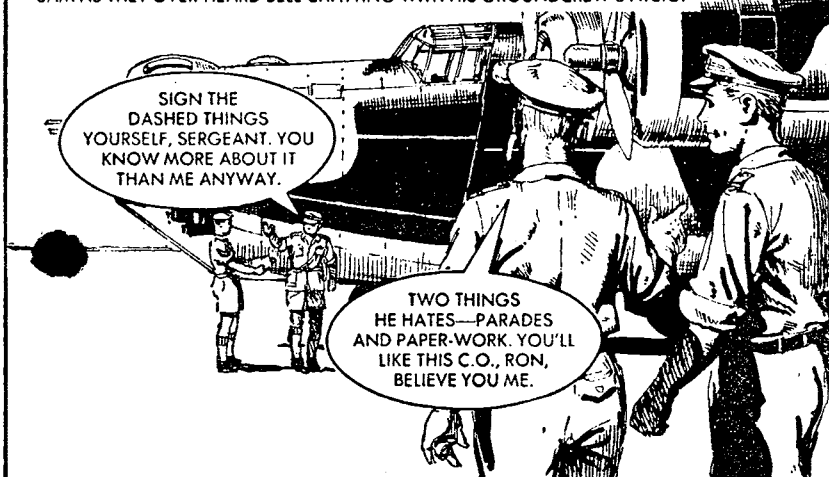


RON GASPED IN DISBELIEF. IT STILL WASN'T FIGHTERS, BUT IT WAS BACK INTO THE ACTION AND THEIR NEW SQUADRON HAD JUST RE-EQUIPPED WITH CONSOLIDATED LIBERATORS IN PLACE OF BLENHEIMS.

THE MIGHTY AMERICAN-BUILT LIBERATORS, WITH THEIR FOUR POWERFUL PRATT AND WHITNEY ENGINES, WERE INDEED EXCITING AIRCRAFT. BOTH PILOTS WERE KEEN TO GET THEIR FIRST FLIGHT IN THEM, AND RON HAD OTHER THINGS ON HIS MIND WHEN THEY TURNED UP AT THEIR NEW BASE.



WING-COMMANDER BRIAN BELL WAS INDEED QUITE A CHARACTER. IN FACT, RON HAD NEVER MET AN OFFICER LIKE HIM BEFORE AND HE GRINNED AT SAM AS THEY OVER-HEARD BELL CHATting WITH HIS GROUND CREW'S N.C.O.

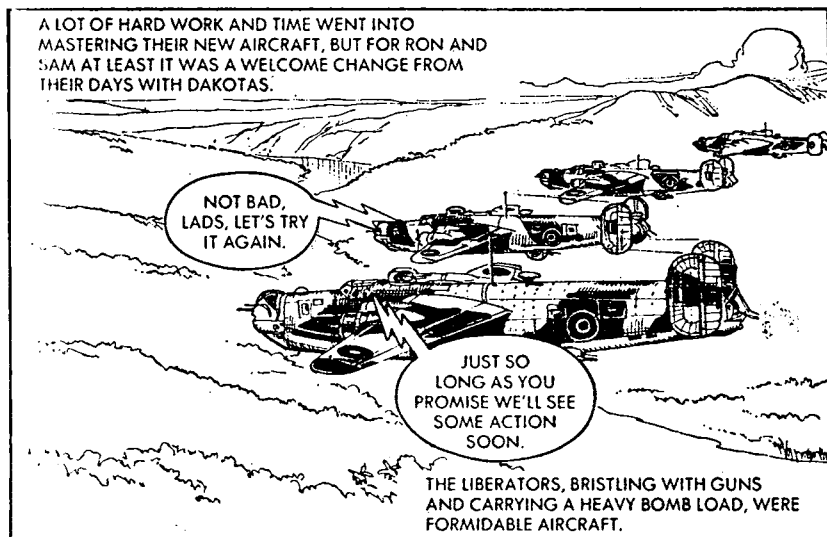




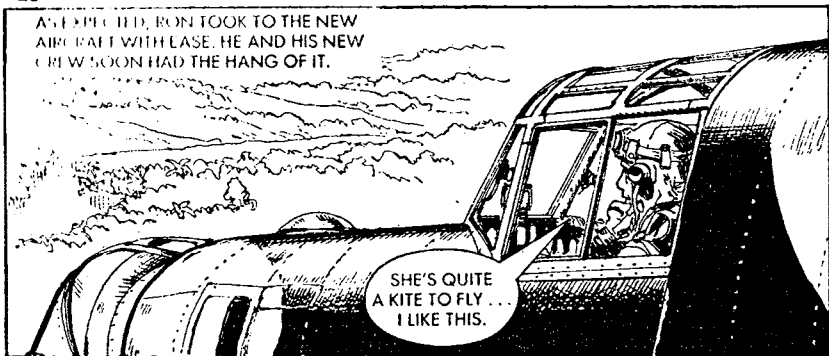
NO TIME WAS WASTED ON FORMALITIES. BELL GOT STRAIGHT TO THE POINT WHEN HE SPOTTED THE NEW ARRIVALS.



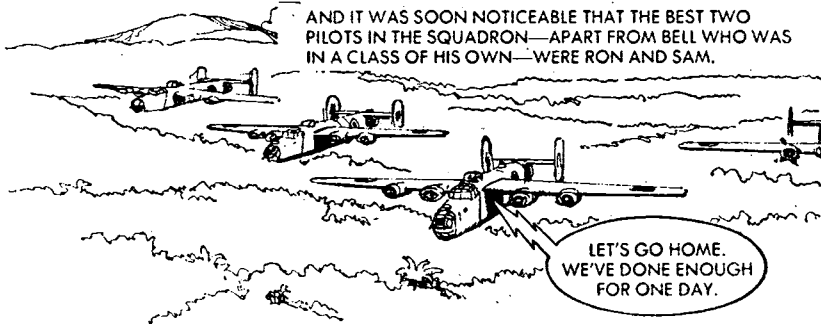
A LOT OF HARD WORK AND TIME WENT INTO MASTERING THEIR NEW AIRCRAFT, BUT FOR RON AND SAM AT LEAST IT WAS A WELCOME CHANGE FROM THEIR DAYS WITH DAKOTAS.



AS EXPECTED, RON TOOK TO THE NEW AIRCRAFT WITH EASE. HE AND HIS NEW CREW SOON HAD THE HANG OF IT.



AND IT WAS SOON NOTICEABLE THAT THE BEST TWO PILOTS IN THE SQUADRON—APART FROM BELL WHO WAS IN A CLASS OF HIS OWN—WERE RON AND SAM.



WING-COMMANDER BELL WAS WELL PLEASED WITH HIS SQUADRON, AND ESPECIALLY SAM AND RON.



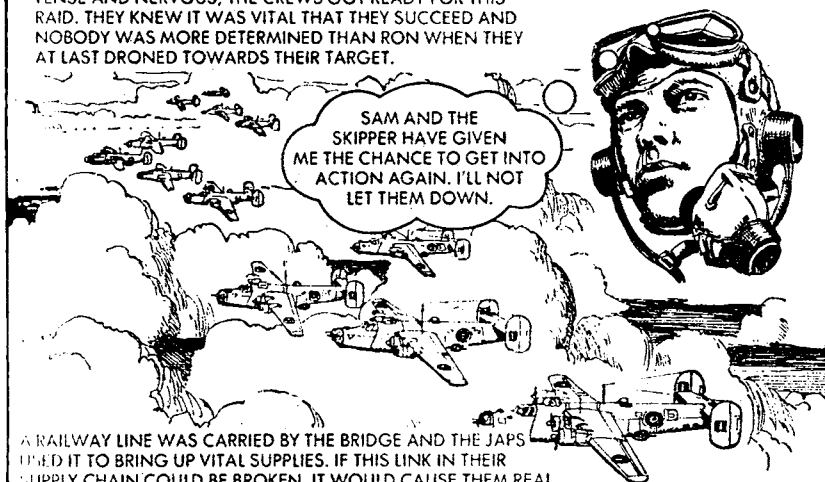
WHEN THE SQUADRON WAS READY FOR ACTION WITH ALL THE PILOTS FAMILIAR WITH THE AIRCRAFT AND THE NEW CREWS WORKING AS A TEAM, THEY GOT THEIR FIRST OPERATIONAL ASSIGNMENT.

NO PRIZES  
FOR GUESSING  
THIS IS A BRIDGE, BUT  
FULL MARKS TO THE MAN WHO  
CAN KNOCK IT FLAT.  
\*NOW, THIS IS  
THE PLAN ...

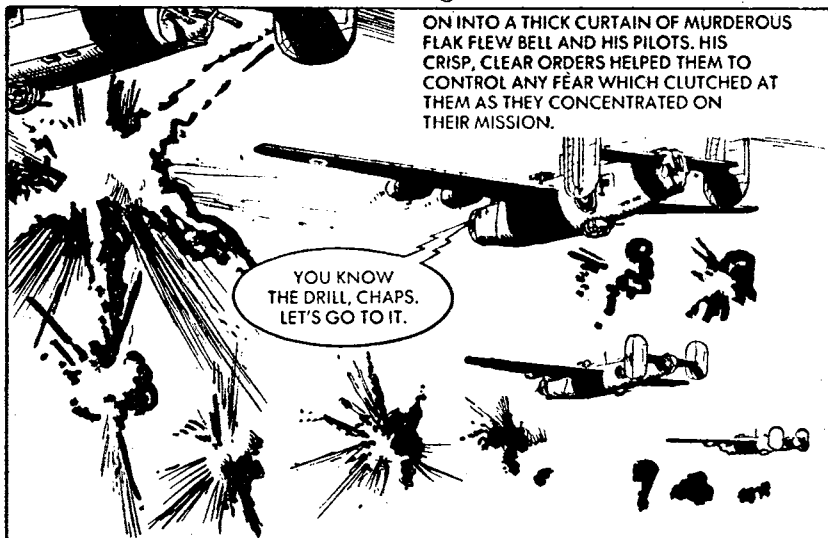
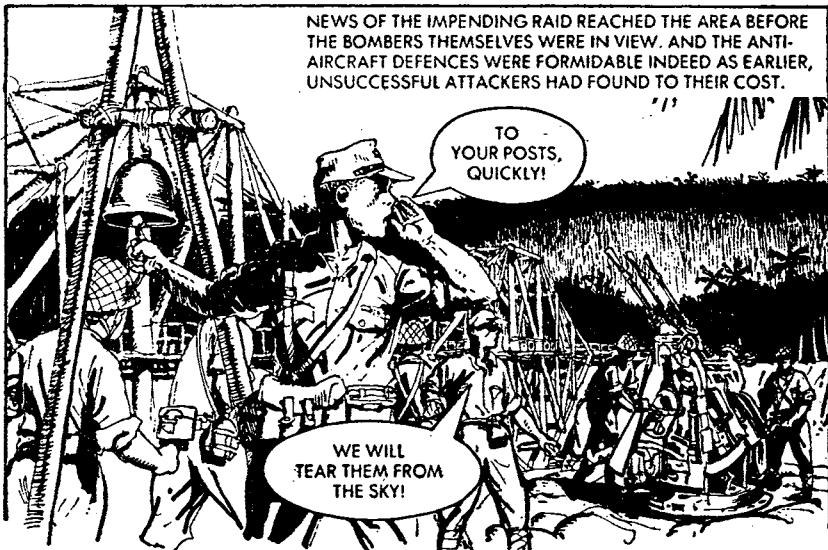


TENSE AND NERVOUS, THE CREWS GOT READY FOR THIS RAID. THEY KNEW IT WAS VITAL THAT THEY SUCCEED AND NOBODY WAS MORE DETERMINED THAN RON WHEN THEY AT LAST DROINED TOWARDS THEIR TARGET.

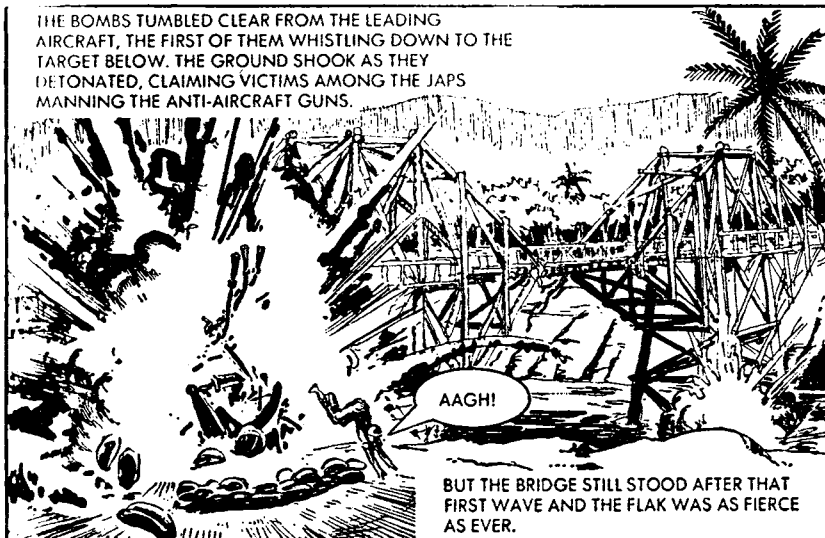
SAM AND THE  
SKIPPER HAVE GIVEN  
ME THE CHANCE TO GET INTO  
ACTION AGAIN. I'LL NOT  
LET THEM DOWN.



A RAILWAY LINE WAS CARRIED BY THE BRIDGE AND THE JAPS USED IT TO BRING UP VITAL SUPPLIES. IF THIS LINK IN THEIR SUPPLY CHAIN COULD BE BROKEN, IT WOULD CAUSE THEM REAL PROBLEMS.



THE BOMBS TUMBLED CLEAR FROM THE LEADING AIRCRAFT, THE FIRST OF THEM WHISTLING DOWN TO THE TARGET BELOW. THE GROUND SHOOK AS THEY DETONATED, CLAIMING VICTIMS AMONG THE JAPS MANNING THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS.



BUT THE BRIDGE STILL STOOD AFTER THAT FIRST WAVE AND THE FLAK WAS AS FIERCE AS EVER.

AS THE SECOND WAVE PREPARED TO ATTACK, BELL'S CALMING VOICE CAME OVER THE AIR, THE SOUND OF IT ENOUGH TO STEADY THE NERVES OF HIS MEN EVEN FURTHER.



THIS TIME THE BOMBS FELL CLOSER, SOME STRADDLING THE TARGET, OTHERS DOING SUPERFICIAL DAMAGE. THEY WERE GETTING CLOSER ALL THE TIME.



AND THE NEXT ATTACK BROUGHT SUCCESS. THE BRIDGE SHUDDERED AS IT TOOK SOME DIRECT HITS, AND THEN THE CENTRE SECTION CAME TOPPLING DOWN. THE LIBERATORS HAD SUCCEEDED ON THEIR FIRST MISSION.

WITH THE DESTROYED BRIDGE BURNING BEHIND THEM, THE PILOTS RE-GROUPED TO TURN FOR HOME, GRIMLY PLEASED. BELL'S VOICE CAME OVER THE AIR —

RIGHT, LADS,  
STEER A COURSE FOR  
BASE—AND QUICKLY. THE JAP  
AIR FORCE CAN'T BE TOO  
FAR AWAY BY NOW...

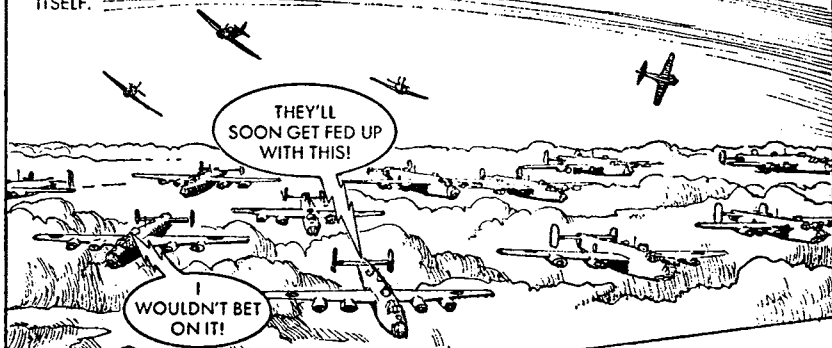
THE JAP AIR COVER WAS VERY THIN,  
BUT THEIR FIGHTERS COULD STILL  
BE A DANGER ONCE THEY REACHED  
THE AREA.

HERE THEY  
COME, BANDITS AT  
NINE O'CLOCK!

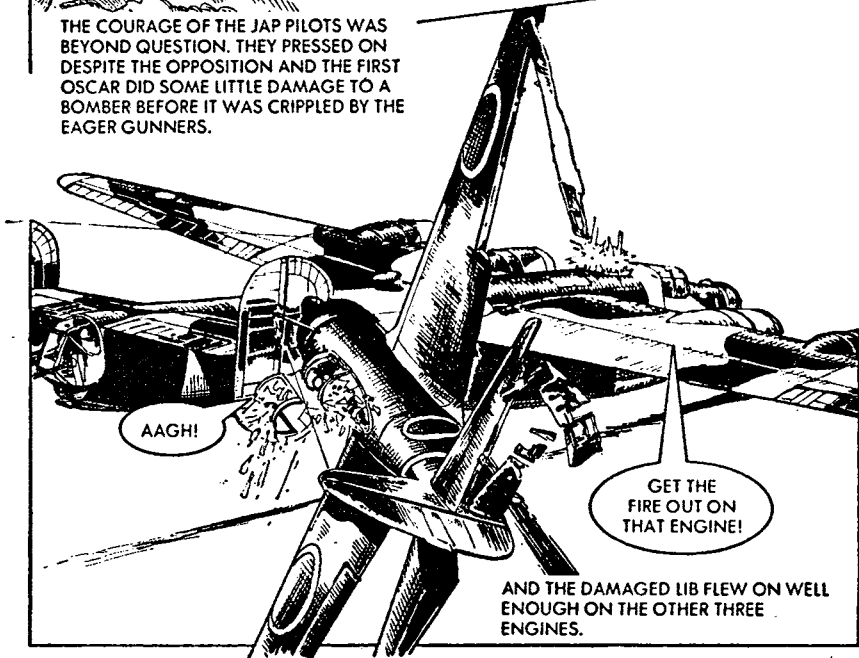
AND THESE PILOTS IN THEIR OSCAR  
FIGHTERS WERE OUT FOR REVENGE.

HIT THEM HARD!

THE DETERMINED FIGHTER ATTACK RAN INTO A DAUNTING DEFENCE. THE LIBERATORS' GUNS WERE SOON CRISS-CROSSING THE SKY WITH DEATH AS EVERY GUNNER IN THE ARMADA OF BOMBERS OPENED FIRE WHENEVER A TARGET PRESENTED ITSELF.

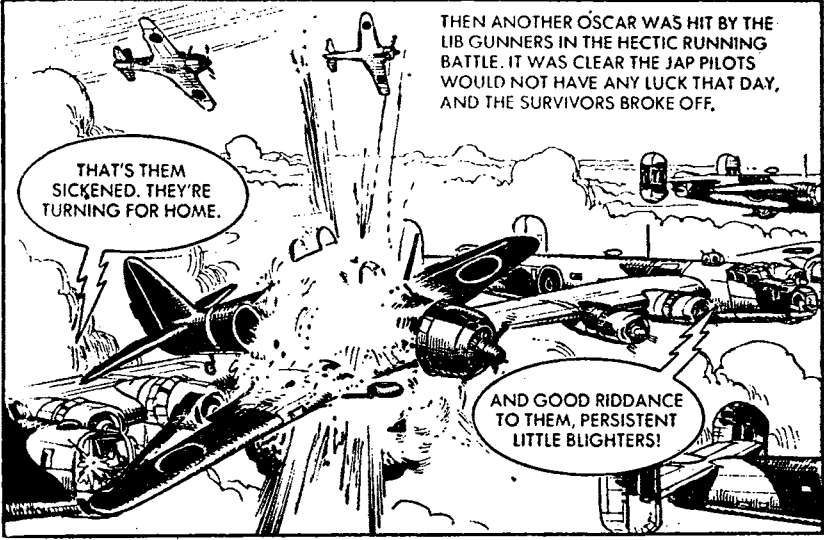


THE COURAGE OF THE JAP PILOTS WAS BEYOND QUESTION. THEY PRESSED ON DESPITE THE OPPOSITION AND THE FIRST OSCAR DID SOME LITTLE DAMAGE TO A BOMBER BEFORE IT WAS CRIPPLED BY THE EAGER GUNNERS.



AND THE DAMAGED LIB FLEW ON WELL ENOUGH ON THE OTHER THREE ENGINES.



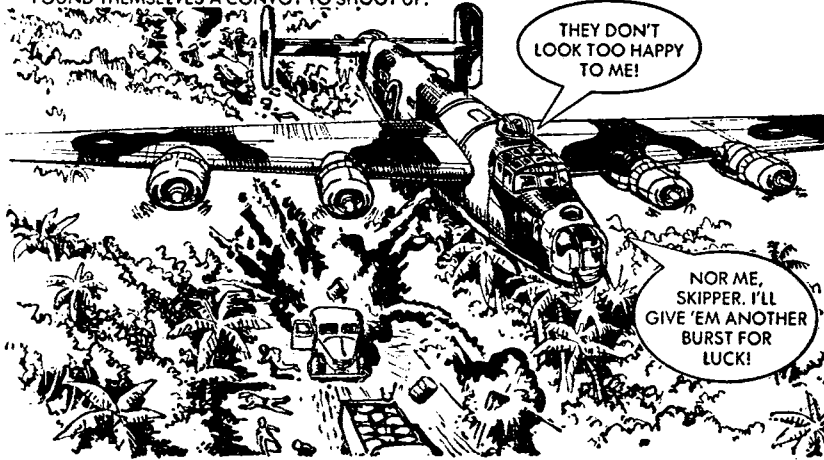


THEN ANOTHER OSCAR WAS HIT BY THE LIB GUNNERS IN THE HECTIC RUNNING BATTLE. IT WAS CLEAR THE JAP PILOTS WOULD NOT HAVE ANY LUCK THAT DAY, AND THE SURVIVORS BROKE OFF.

THAT'S THEM  
SICKENED. THEY'RE  
TURNING FOR HOME.

AND GOOD RIDDANCE  
TO THEM, PERSISTENT  
LITTLE BLIGHTERS!

BUT THAT WASN'T THE FINISH OF THEIR ESCAPADES THAT DAY. BELL HAD BRIEFED THEM TO LOOK OUT FOR ANY LIKELY TARGETS ON THE WAY BACK AND CAUSE AS MUCH DAMAGE AND TROUBLE AS POSSIBLE. RON AND HIS CREW FOUND THEMSELVES A CONVOY TO SHOOT UP.



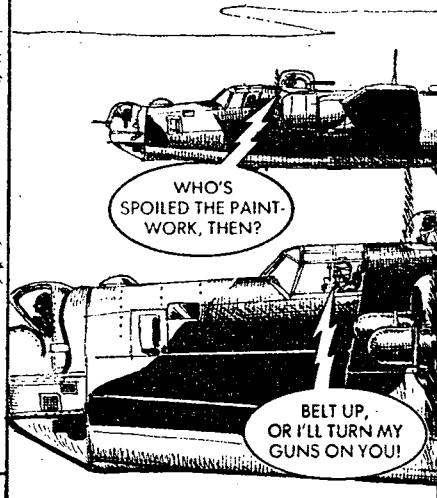
THEY DON'T  
LOOK TOO HAPPY  
TO ME!

NOR ME,  
SKIPPER. I'LL  
GIVE 'EM ANOTHER  
BURST FOR  
LUCK!

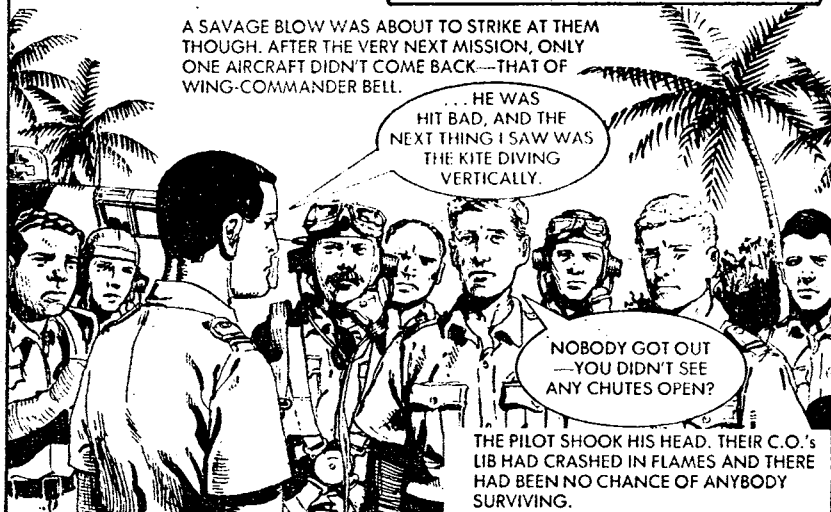
NOT ALL THE RAIDS WERE SO SUCCESSFUL AND CASUALTIES MOUNTED, BUT THE MORALE STAYED HIGH AS THE SQUADRON KEPT UP THE PRESSURE ON THE ENEMY.



AND AFTER ONE SUCH RAID, RON'S PLANE HAD TAKEN QUITE A BATTERING, BUT SAM THOUGHT THIS WAS HILARIOUS.



A SAVAGE BLOW WAS ABOUT TO STRIKE AT THEM THOUGH. AFTER THE VERY NEXT MISSION, ONLY ONE AIRCRAFT DIDN'T COME BACK—THAT OF WING-COMMANDER BELL.



THE PILOT SHOOK HIS HEAD. THEIR C.O.'S LIB HAD CRASHED IN FLAMES AND THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANCE OF ANYBODY SURVIVING.

THERE WAS A LOT OF TALK AND SPECULATION OVER THE FOLLOWING DAYS ABOUT WHO THEIR NEW C.O. WOULD BE. AN AWFUL LOT DEPENDED ON THE TYPE OF MAN THEY GOT, AND RON AND SAM WERE JUST AS ANXIOUS AS ALL THE OTHERS TO KNOW WHO HE WAS.

HEY,  
OUR NEW BOSS  
HAS ARRIVED. I DIDN'T  
CATCH HIS NAME  
THOUGH...

NEVER MIND,  
WE'LL SOON FIND OUT!  
HANG ON, LADS...

AND AT HIS USUAL BREAKNECK SPEED, SAM SENT THE JEEP SKIDDING ACROSS THE AIRFIELD.

WHEN THEY SAW THEIR NEW C.O. FOR THE FIRST TIME THE BOTTOM FELL RIGHT OUT OF RON'S WORLD AS HE RECOGNISED HIM. IT WAS PRIOR — AND HE HADN'T CHANGED IN THE SLIGHTEST.

OH, NO!  
JUST MY LUCK  
— PRIOR!

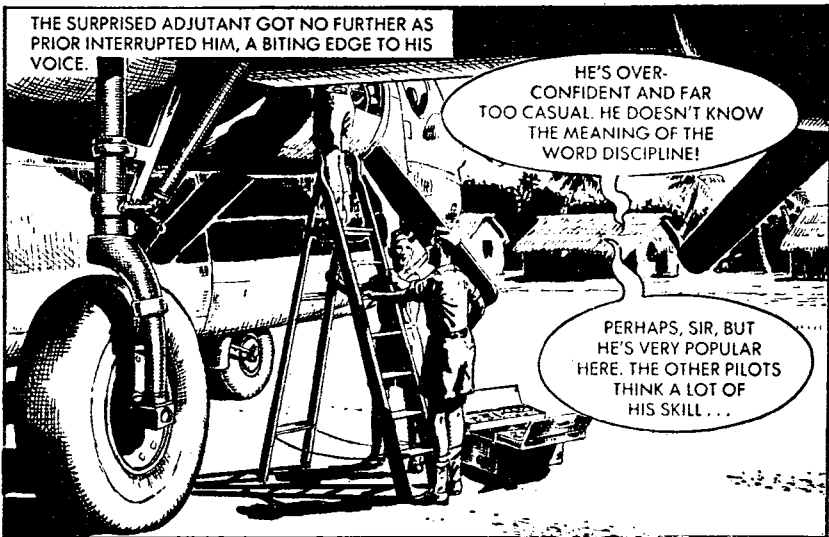
THE  
SAME PRIOR  
YOU TOLD ME ABOUT?  
BROTHER, WE'VE  
GOT PROBLEMS...



IMMEDIATELY PRIOR MADE HIS PRESENCE FELT, TIGHTENING UP ALL AROUND ON DISCIPLINE AND SUCH LIKE. IT DIDN'T TAKE HIM LONG EITHER TO DISCOVER RON WAS ON THE SQUADRON STRENGTH, AND HIS ATTITUDE SURPRISED THE ADJUTANT.



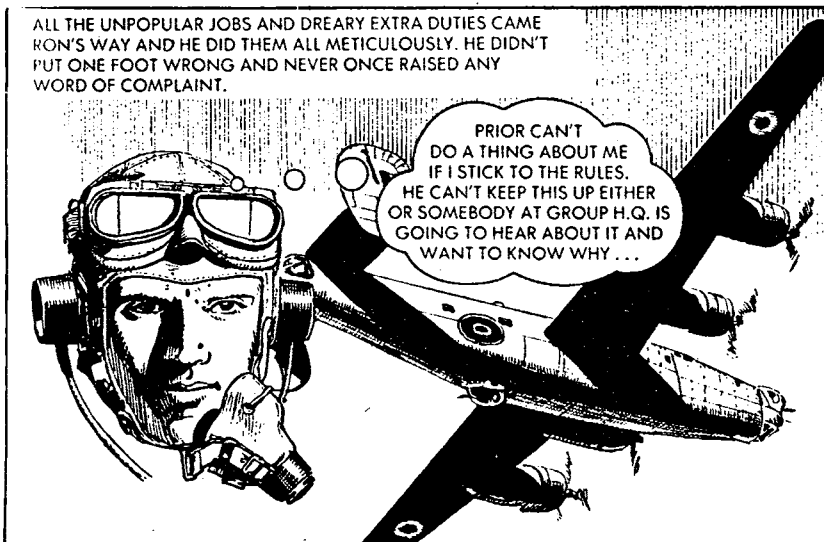
THE SURPRISED ADJUTANT GOT NO FURTHER AS PRIOR INTERRUPTED HIM, A BITING EDGE TO HIS VOICE.



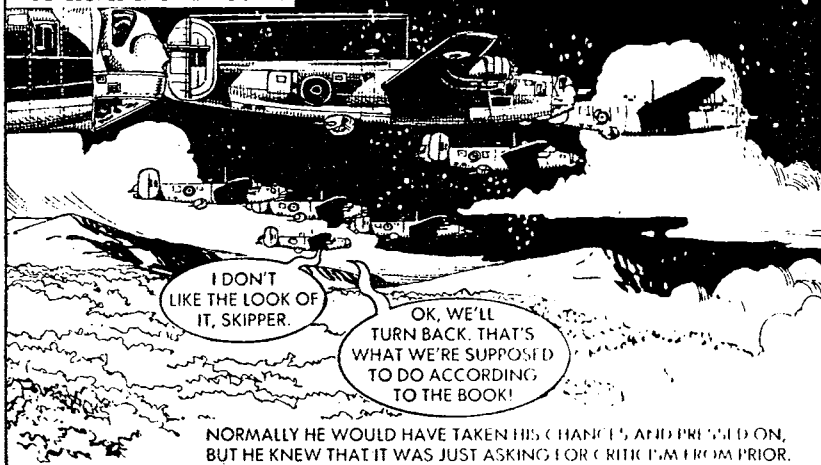
REALISING THAT ANY MOVE TO TRANSFER RON MIGHT SEEM LIKE VICTIMISATION, PRIOR CHANGED HIS TUNE AND WENT ABOUT IT IN OTHER WAYS, MAKING LIFE VERY DIFFICULT FOR RON AND HIS CREW. IN FACT, RON HARDLY GOT ANY TIME TO EVEN CHAT TO SAM.



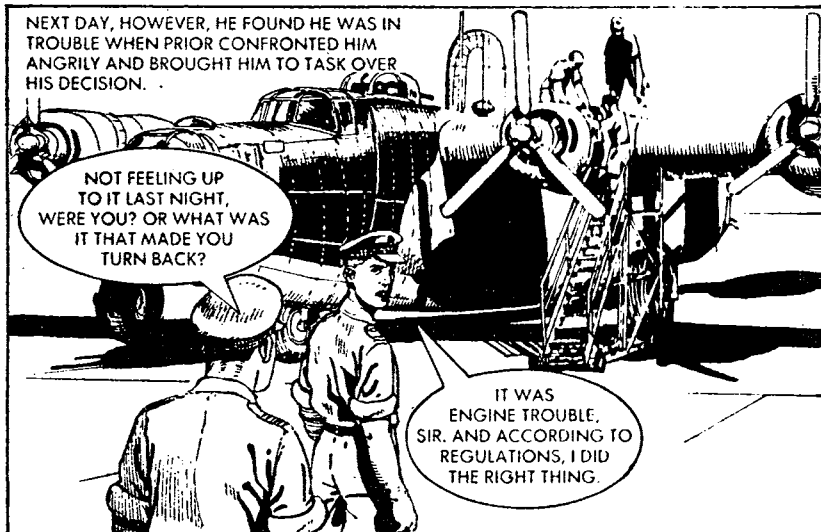
ALL THE UNPOPULAR JOBS AND DREARY EXTRA DUTIES CAME RON'S WAY AND HE DID THEM ALL METICULOUSLY. HE DIDN'T PUT ONE FOOT WRONG AND NEVER ONCE RAISED ANY WORD OF COMPLAINT.



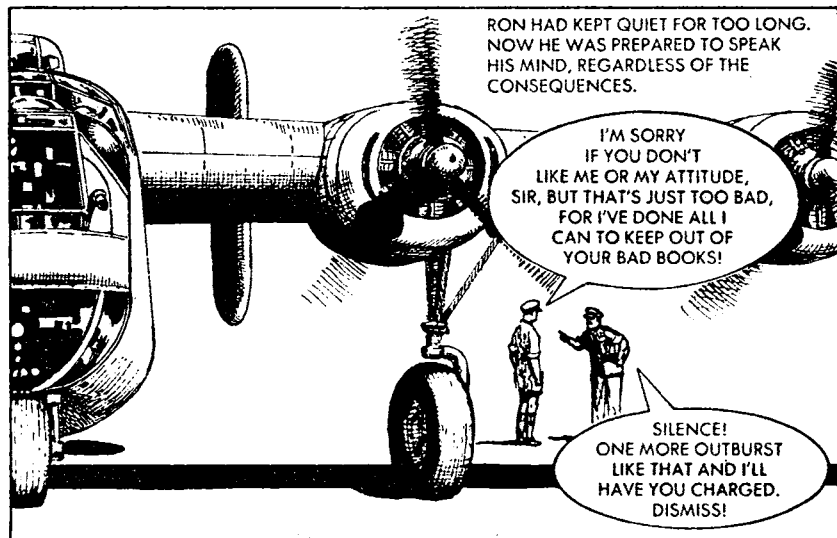
YET DESPITE ALL THE CARE TAKEN BY RON, HE STILL COULDN'T ESCAPE TROUBLE. ON THE NIGHT OF THE FIRST RAID CARRIED OUT UNDER PRIOR'S COMMAND, RON'S BOMBER DEVELOPED ENGINE TROUBLE.



NEXT DAY, HOWEVER, HE FOUND HE WAS IN TROUBLE WHEN PRIOR CONFRONTED HIM ANGRILY AND BROUGHT HIM TO TASK OVER HIS DECISION.



PRIOR STIFFENED AT THE REPLY. HE WAS READY WITH ANOTHER LINE OF ATTACK THOUGH.



ANGRILY RON TURNED ON HIS HEEL AND STRODE AWAY. HE WAS FURIOUS BUT PRIOR HAD ALREADY CALMED DOWN A LITTLE AND HIS THOUGHTS WOULD HAVE COME AS QUITE A SURPRISE TO RON. IN FACT, PRIOR WAS PUZZLED BY THEM HIMSELF.

COULD I BE WRONG ABOUT HIM? ALL THE OTHERS THINK HIM A GOOD TYPE AND HE DOES HAVE GUTS, I'LL SAY THAT FOR HIM.

PRIOR WAS A HARD TASKMASTER BUT HE WAS BASICALLY A FAIR MAN. IT SEEMED HE NOW HAD A LOT TO THINK ABOUT.

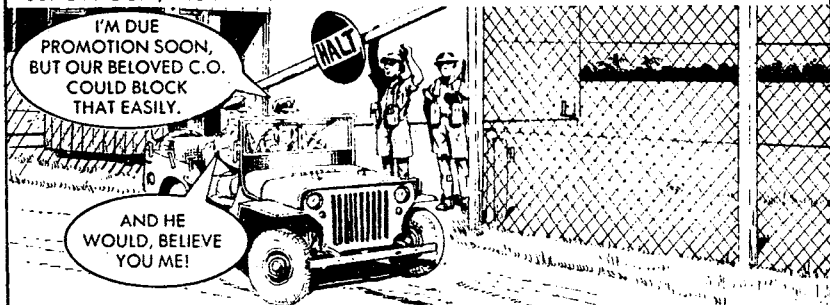
SOME OF THE OTHER PILOTS HAD ALREADY FELT THE BITTER EDGE OF PRIOR'S TONGUE AND SAM WAS AMONG THEM. HIS SKILFUL BUT FAST DRIVING WAS THE CAUSE OF IT ALL.

I WANT A WORD WITH HIM LATER, ADJUTANT. HE'S NO USE TO ME WITH A BROKEN LEG OR ARM. HE CAN KEEP HIS FANCY DRIVING FOR AFTER THE WAR— IF HE SURVIVES!

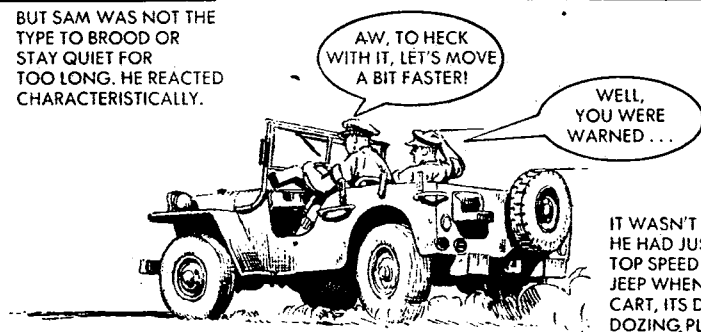
YES, SIR...



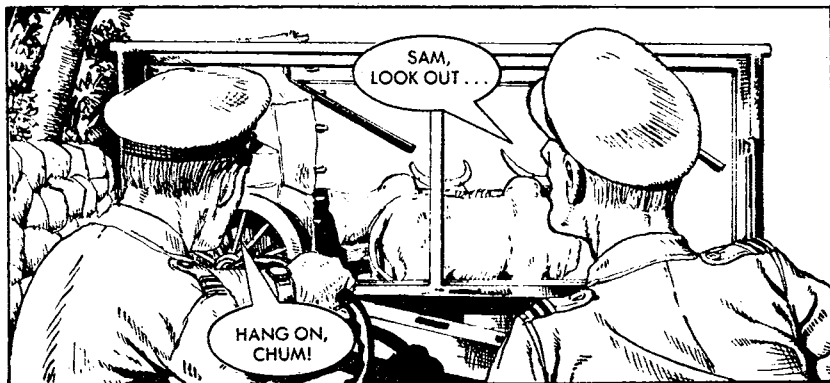
THE WARNING WAS DULY DELIVERED AND AS SAM CONFIDED IN RON, WHEN THEY TOOK SOME TIME OFF, PRIOR HAD ONE VERY POWERFUL ADVANTAGE.



BUT SAM WAS NOT THE TYPE TO BROOD OR STAY QUIET FOR TOO LONG. HE REACTED CHARACTERISTICALLY.



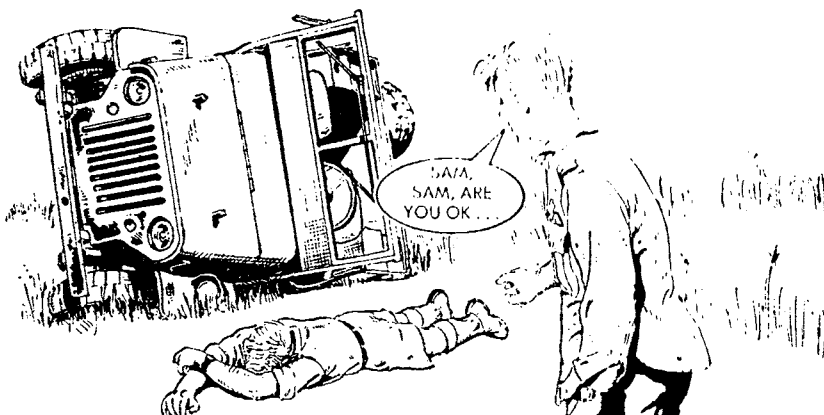
IT WASN'T SAM'S DAY. HE HAD JUST COAXED TOP SPEED FROM THE JEEP WHEN A BULLOCK CART, ITS DRIVER DOZING, PLODGED OUT ON TO THE ROAD.



THE INDIAN DRIVER WAS COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF IT ALL. HE DOZED ON AS THE JEEP SKIDDED PAST HIM, CAREERING OFF THE ROAD, THE TWO PILOTS FLUNG FROM THE VEHICLE.



RON LANDED HEAVILY. BRUISED AND SHAKEN, HE REALISED HE HAD NO BROKEN BONES AND CAREFULLY ROSE TO HIS FEET. HIS FIRST CONCERN WAS FOR SAM WHO LAY MOTIONLESS BESIDE THE UP-TURNED JEEP.



HE STUMBLED OVER TO HIS MATE, SEEING AT ONCE HE WAS STILL UNCONSCIOUS. HE BEGAN TO REVIVE HIM...

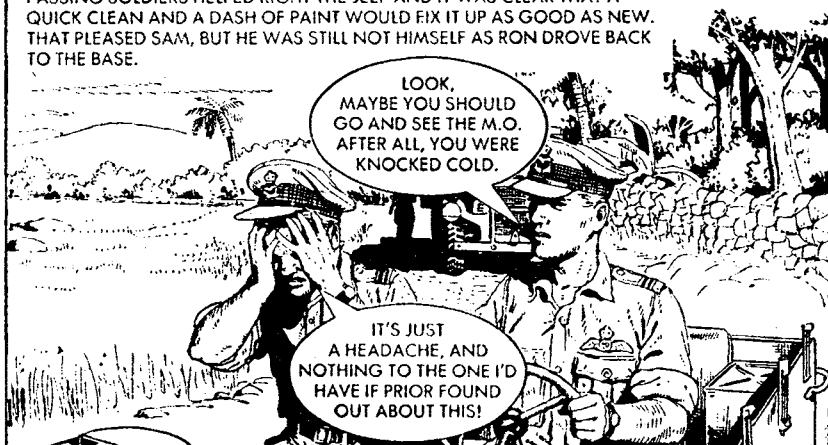
... AND AFTER WHAT SEEMED LIKE AN AGE, SAM SLOWLY OPENED HIS EYES.



IN FACT, SAM'S MAIN WORRY WAS THAT PRIOR SHOULD NOT LEARN OF THE INCIDENT.

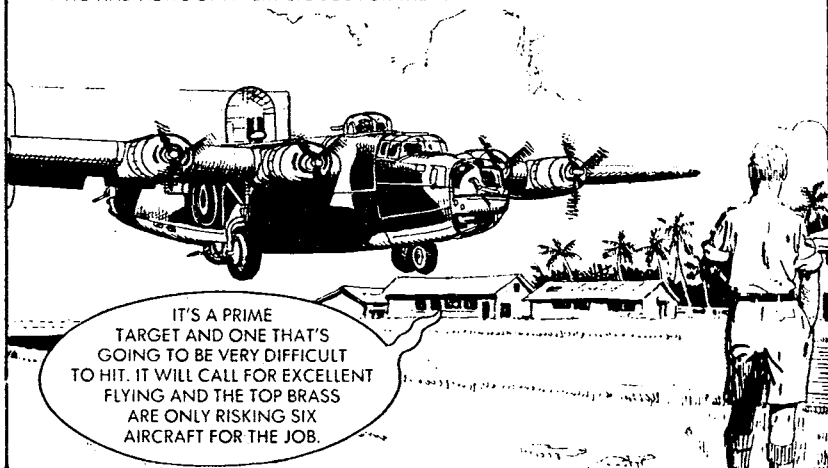


PASSING SOLDIERS HELPED RIGHT THE JEEP AND IT WAS CLEAR THAT A QUICK CLEAN AND A DASH OF PAINT WOULD FIX IT UP AS GOOD AS NEW. THAT PLEASED SAM, BUT HE WAS STILL NOT HIMSELF AS RON DROVE BACK TO THE BASE.



RON LEFT IT AT THAT, MAINLY BECAUSE HE KNEW SAM WAS NOT DUE TO FLY SOON ANYWAY. HIS CREW WERE ON LEAVE AND HE WAS ONLY THERE TO TAKE OVER ANOTHER AIRCRAFT IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.

LUCKILY FOR THEM, NOBODY WAS EVEN INTERESTED IN ANY SUCH MINOR INCIDENT. THE SQUADRON HAD BEEN CALLED TOGETHER BY PRIOR WHO HAD NEWS OF A VERY BIG JOB FOR THEM.



THEIR TARGET WAS A JAP SUPPLY DUMP WITH A DIFFERENCE. THE SUPPLIES WERE STORED IN MINE-SHAFTS SET INTO THE SIDES OF A NARROW, JUNGLE-COVERED VALLEY. IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO GET IN CLOSE ENOUGH TO BOMB ACCURATELY.



ALL THE PILOTS WERE KEEN TO GET IN ON THIS ONE, AND SAM HAD CURSED SILENTLY WHEN HE REALISED HE HAD LITTLE CHANCE. WHAT WITH HIS CREW BEING ON LEAVE. BUT WHEN PRIOR LISTED THE MEN TO GO, SAM WAS AMONG THEM — ORDERED TO FLY WITH RON'S CREW. IT WAS A BITTER BLOW TO RON, AND SAM WAS NOT EXACTLY OVERJOYED EITHER.

RON,  
I'M SORRY.  
SURE, I WANT TO  
GO, BUT NOT  
LIKE THIS...

IT'S NOT  
YOUR FAULT. I  
SHOULD HAVE KNOWN PRIOR  
WOULD HAVE PULLED A  
TRICK LIKE THIS!



AS SAM WENT OFF TO THE MORE DETAILED BRIEFING, RON SAVAGELY STRODE OFF.

IT SEEMED THAT PRIOR WAS GOING TO MAKE LIFE VERY DIFFICULT FOR HIM, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. AND AS HE MOODILY WALKED ALONE TO THINK THINGS OUT, HIS CO-PILOT, SERGEANT SIMON BLACK, CAME LOOKING FOR HIM SOME TIME LATER.

AH,  
THERE YOU ARE,  
SKIPPER. I COULDN'T  
FIND YOU ANY  
PLACE.

WELL,  
I HAVEN'T  
EXACTLY BEEN HOGGING  
THE LIME-LIGHT  
TODAY!



ALL RON'S CREW KNEW AND LIKED SAM AND WOULD BE READER TO FLY WITH HIM THAN ANY OTHER PILOT -- EXCEPT RON HIMSELF, OF COURSE. SO WHAT SIMON NOW HAD TO SAY CAME AS QUITE A SHOCK TO RON.

IT'S ABOUT SAM. I DON'T THINK HE SHOULD BE FLYING ON THIS RAID.

HANG ON, SIMON, WHAT D'YOU MEAN?

SIMON CLEARLY DIDN'T LIKE TELLING TALES LIKE THIS BUT HE SQUARED HIS JAW AND BLURTED OUT HIS STORY, EXPLAINING THAT HE'D BEEN ALONE WITH SAM AFTER THE DETAILED BRIEFING WHEN THE OTHER PILOT HAD JUST KEELED OVER.

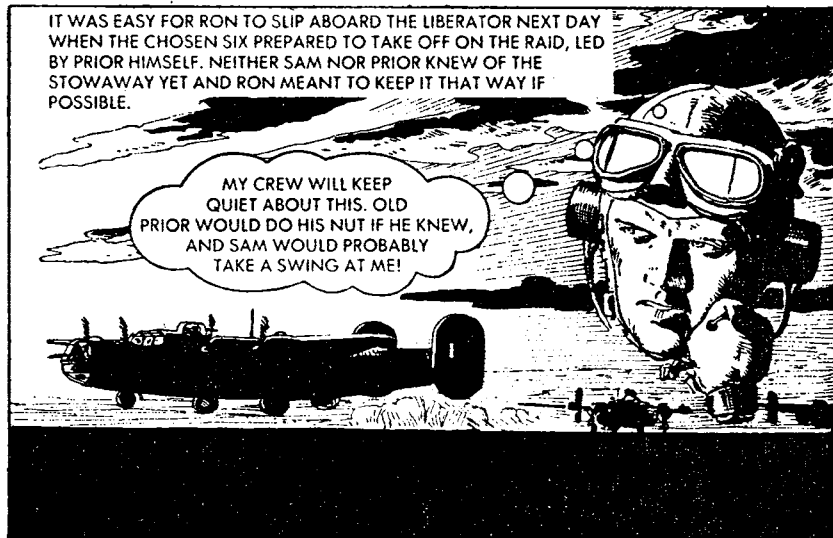
... HE WAS OUT COLD FOR A FEW MINUTES AND I'D A DEVIL OF A JOB BRINGING HIM ROUND. HE LAUGHED IT OFF, SAYING IT WAS JUST A BUG OF SOME KIND.

THE IDIOT! IT'S THE BLOW HE GOT ON THE HEAD WHEN THE JEEP CRASHED. BUT IF WE REPORT IT, HE WON'T GET ON THE RAID ...

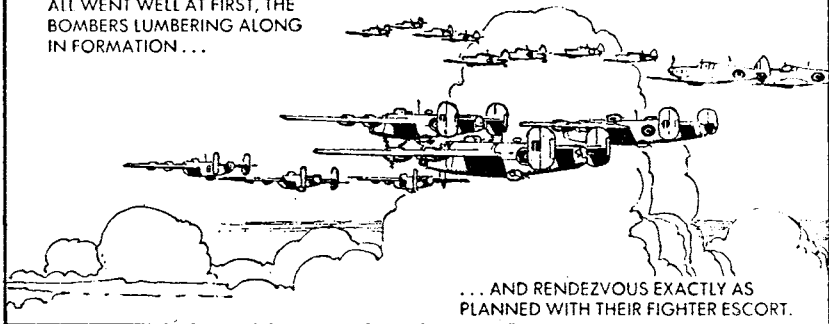
NEITHER MAN WANTED TO SEE SAM KEPT OFF THE RAID, BUT RON KNEW WHAT WAS BOTHERING SIMON. THE SERGEANT WAS A GOOD PILOT BUT HE WASN'T A PATCH ON RON OR SAM, AND HE WAS SENSIBLE ENOUGH TO RECOGNISE THE FACT.



IT WAS EASY FOR RON TO SLIP ABOARD THE LIBERATOR NEXT DAY WHEN THE CHOSEN SIX PREPARED TO TAKE OFF ON THE RAID, LED BY PRIOR HIMSELF. NEITHER SAM NOR PRIOR KNEW OF THE STOWAWAY YET AND RON MEANT TO KEEP IT THAT WAY IF POSSIBLE.

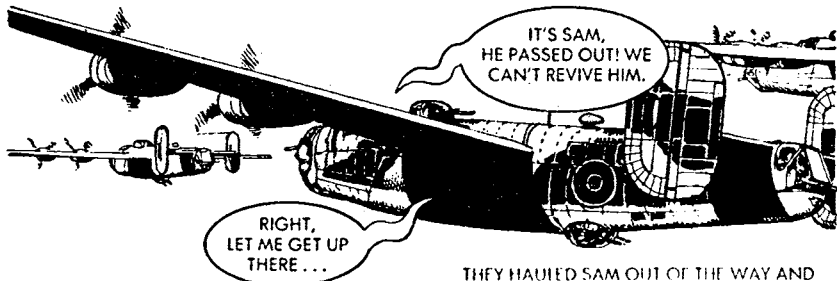


ALL WENT WELL AT FIRST, THE  
BOMBERS LUMBERING ALONG  
IN FORMATION...



... AND RENDEZVOUS EXACTLY AS  
PLANNED WITH THEIR FIGHTER ESCORT.

AND JUST WHEN RON WAS BEGINNING TO THINK HIS  
STOWAWAY MOVE HAD BEEN A WASTE OF TIME, A MESSAGE  
FROM SIMON WAS RELAYED TO HIM.

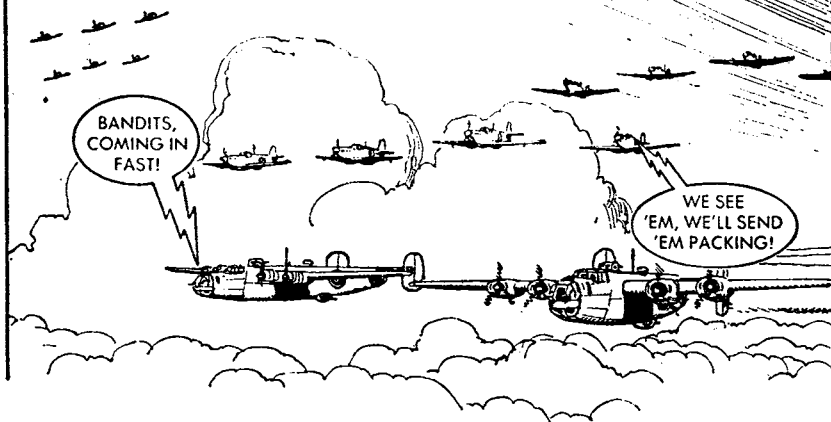


THEY HAULIED SAM OUT OF THE WAY AND  
MADE HIM AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE.  
SIMON KEPT IN FORMATION UNTIL RON  
SLIPPED INTO SAM'S SEAT, TENSE BUT  
ALERT.

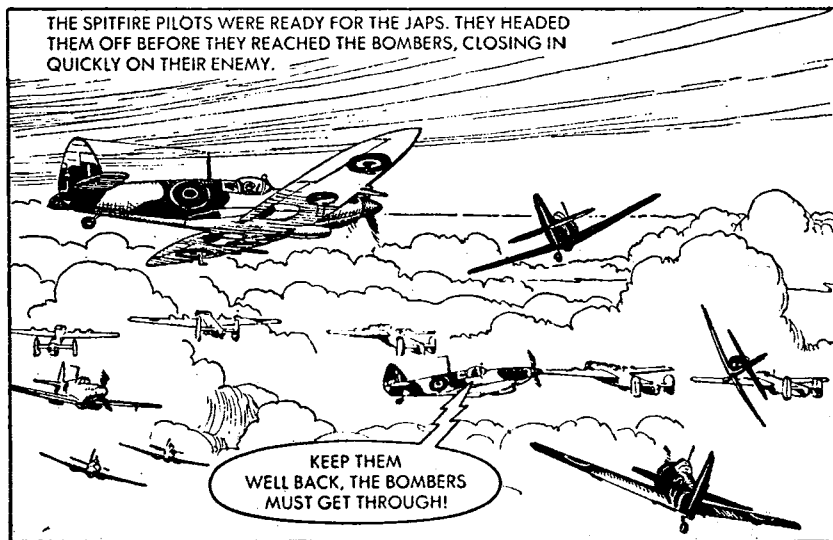




THE TAKE-OVER WAS NOT NOTICED BY ANY OF THE OTHER CREWS AND THERE WAS SOON A LOT MORE FOR PRIOR AND HIS PILOTS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN JAP OSCAR FIGHTERS CAME DIVING DOWN ON THEM.



THE SPITFIRE PILOTS WERE READY FOR THE JAPS. THEY HEADED THEM OFF BEFORE THEY REACHED THE BOMBERS, CLOSING IN QUICKLY ON THEIR ENEMY.



FIRST BLOOD WENT TO THE R.A.F. ONE OSCAR PILOT WAS CAUGHT NAPPING AND PAID THE PRICE.

YOU WERE  
TOO CONFIDENT,  
CHUM...

THE DAMAGED FIGHTER SPIRALLED INTO  
THE SIGHTS OF THE NEAREST BOMBER.  
THE GUNNERS BLASTED IT TO PIECES.

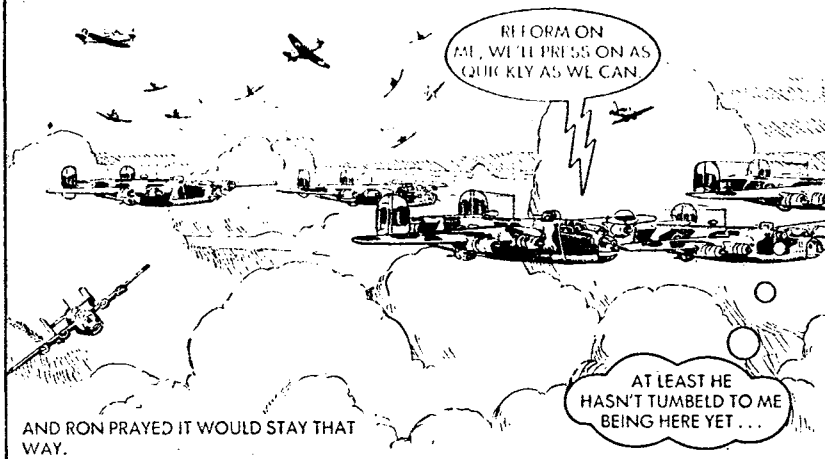
AAAGH!

BUT THE JAP PILOTS WERE DETERMINED,  
PRESSING HOME THEIR ATTACKS RUTHLESSLY.  
ONE DODGED THROUGH THE FIGHTER SCREEN  
AND DREW A BEAD ON THE NEAREST BOMBER,  
HIS BULLETS SCORING HITS.

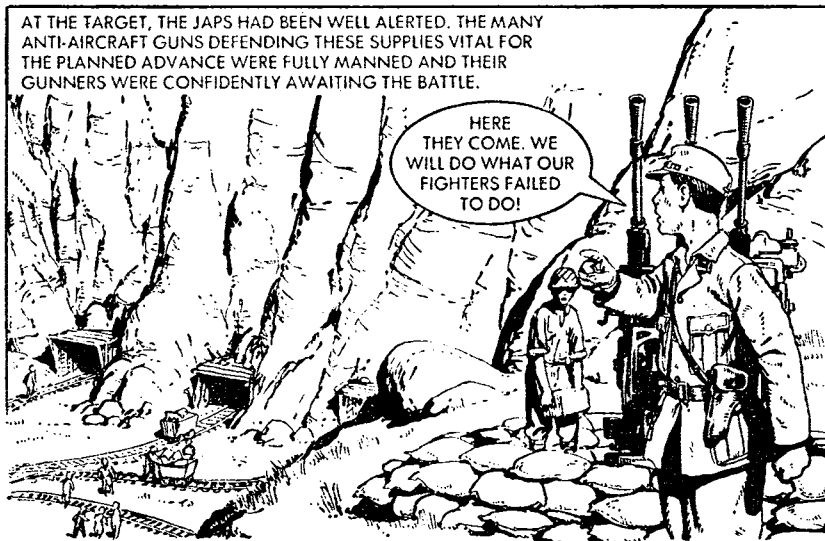
THEY  
WILL NOT  
ESCAPE US...

HE'S GOT ONE  
ENGINE! GUNNERS, GET  
HIM AND QUICK!

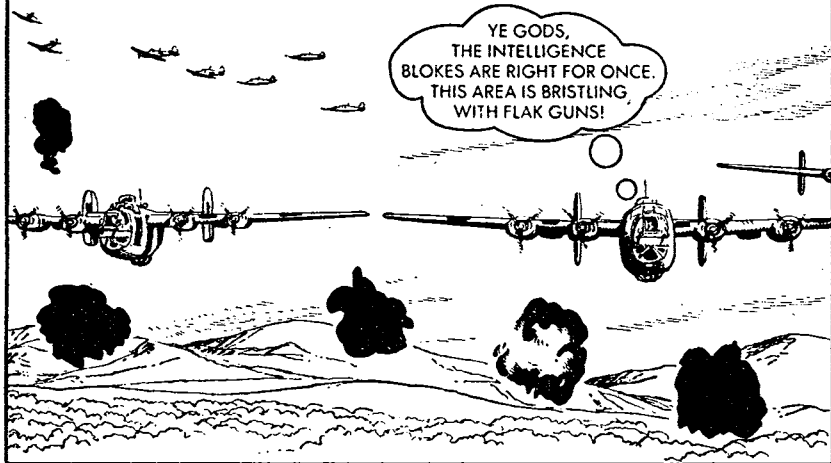
THE STING OF THE JAP ATTACK HAD BEEN DEALT WITH BY NOW, BUT THE DAMAGED LIBERATOR HAD TO TURN FOR HOME. GRIMLY PRIOR NOTED THE FACT THAT THEY WERE NOW ONE BOMB-LOAD LESS FOR THE VITAL ATTACK.



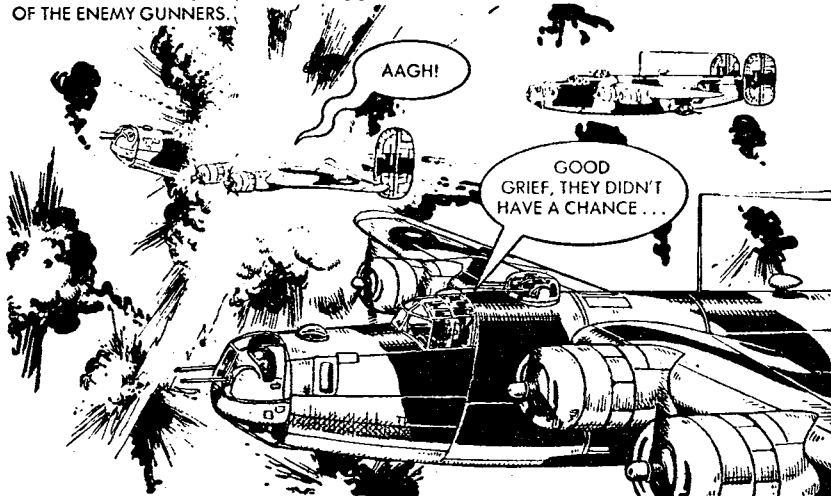
AT THE TARGET, THE JAPS HAD BEEN WELL ALERTED. THE MANY ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS DEFENDING THESE SUPPLIES VITAL FOR THE PLANNED ADVANCE WERE FULLY MANNED AND THEIR GUNNERS WERE CONFIDENTLY AWAITING THE BATTLE.



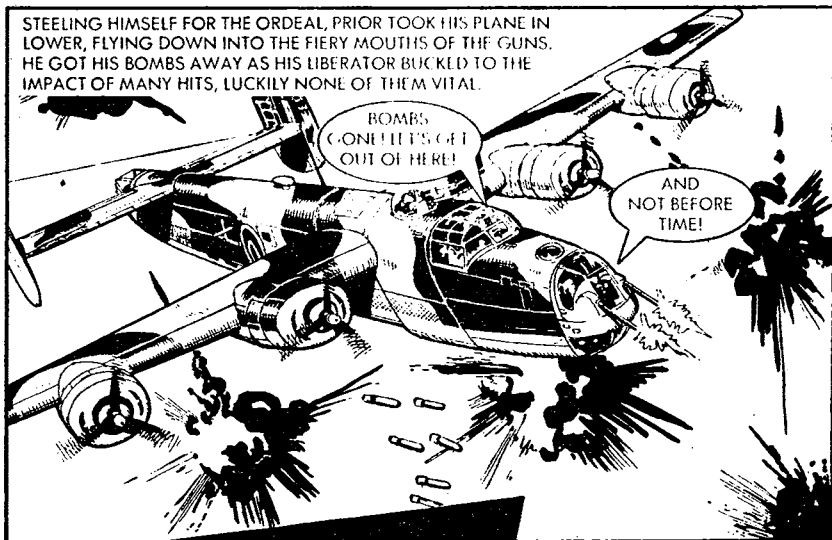
PRIOR LED HIS SQUADRON IN LOWER TOWARDS THE TARGET. STEADILY THEY APPROACHED THE VALLEY AS THE SKY ALL AROUND THEM FLAMED WITH BURST AFTER BURST OF FLAK. EVEN THE MOST EXPERIENCED PILOTS HAD NEVER SEEN ANYTHING QUITE LIKE IT.



JUST AS PRIOR NOTED THIS GRIM FACT, HE GASPED AS THE BOMBER NEXT TO HIS SUDDENLY CEASED TO EXIST. ITS DESTRUCTION WAS TERRIBLE PROOF OF THE ACCURACY OF THE ENEMY GUNNERS.



STEELING HIMSELF FOR THE ORDEAL, PRIOR TOOK HIS PLANE IN LOWER, FLYING DOWN INTO THE FIERY MOUTHS OF THE GUNS. HE GOT HIS BOMBS AWAY AS HIS LIBERATOR BUCKED TO THE IMPACT OF MANY HITS, LUCKILY NONE OF THEM VITAL.



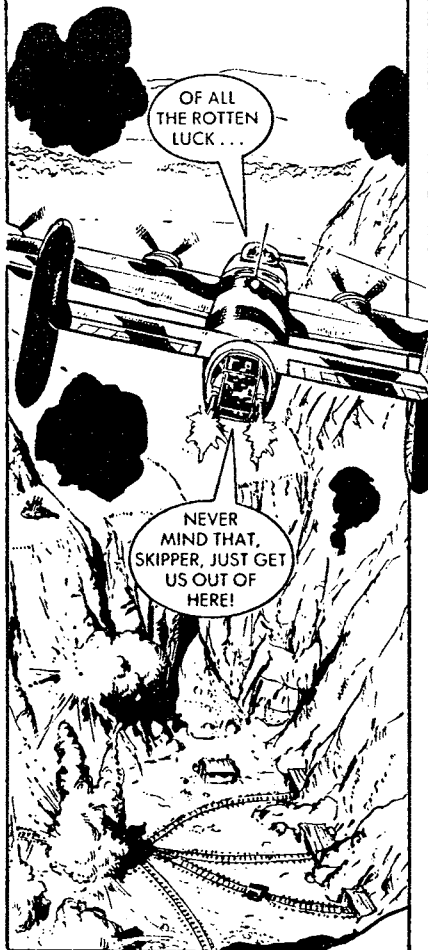
DROPPING BOMBS ACCURATELY ON THE TARGET WAS NOT EASY IN THE FACE OF SUCH FIERCE DEFENCE . . .



PRIOR WAS THE FIRST TO SEE THAT HIS ATTACK HAD DONE LITTLE REAL HARM. HE MADE NO EXCUSES —



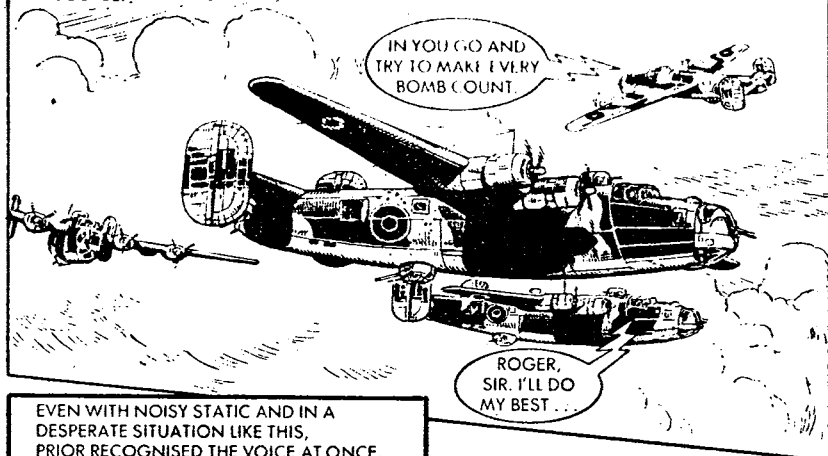
THE SECOND AIRCRAFT TO MAKE ITS RUN WAS BUFFETED AT THE LAST MINUTE BY SOME EXPLODING ANTI-AIRCRAFT SHELLS. THE CREW KNEW AS SOON AS THE BOMBS DROPPED CLEAR THAT THEY WERE NO NEARER THAN PRIOR HAD BEEN.



AND WHEN THE THIRD LOAD OF BOMBS CAME WHISTLING DOWN, THE JAPS BELOW WERE GRIMLY TRIUMPHANT. FOR THESE HAD BEEN RELEASED TOO LATE TO DO ANY DAMAGE TO THE MAIN INSTALLATIONS.



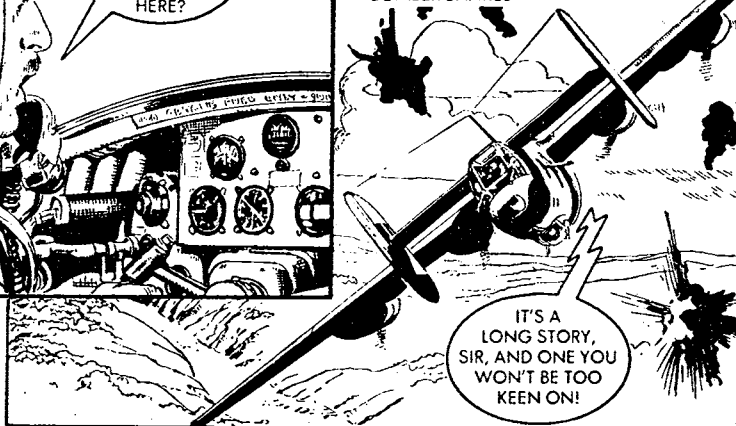
GRIMLY PRIOR HAD WATCHED ALL THIS, KNOWING THAT THE MISSION NOW DEPENDED ON THE LAST LIB AND ITS BOMBS. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESS TO THE PILOT, THINKING IT WAS STILL SAM, OF COURSE.



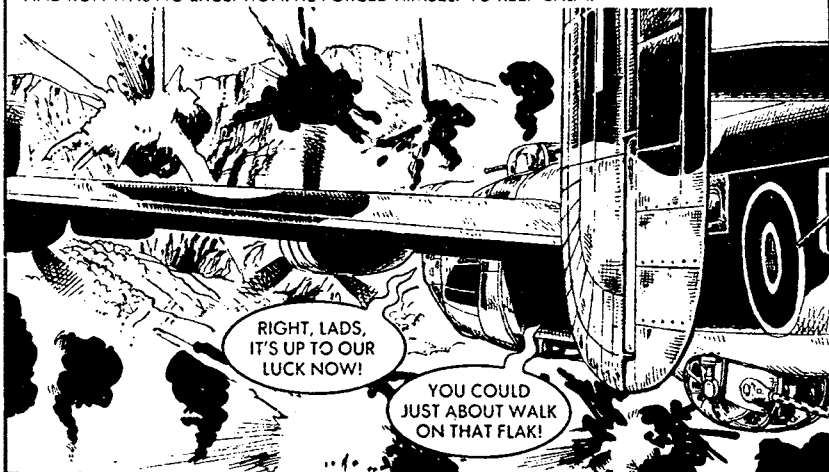
EVEN WITH NOISY STATIC AND IN A DESPERATE SITUATION LIKE THIS, PRIOR RECOGNISED THE VOICE AT ONCE.



BUT ALREADY RON WAS MAKING HIS ATTACK. HE ANSWERED DRILY AS HIS BOMBER BANKED —



DOWN WENT RON THEN, CALLING ON EVERY SCRAP OF COURAGE AND SKILL AS HE FLEW INTO THE MAELSTROM OF RISING FLAK. IT HAD SHAKEN ALL THE OTHERS RIGID AND RON WAS NO EXCEPTION. HE FORCED HIMSELF TO KEEP CALM.



JUST WHEN IT SEEMED THE DIVING LIBERATOR COULD SURVIVE NO LONGER, THE FLAK SLACKENED SUDDENLY. RON'S CREW WERE QUICK TO SPOT THE REASON — PRIOR HAD LED THE OTHER LIBS IN A VERY EFFECTIVE DIVERSIONARY ATTACK TO SHOOT UP THE JAP GUNNERS.





THAT EXTRA HELP FROM THE OTHERS GAVE RON THE OPPORTUNITY HE NEEDED. FLYING PERFECTLY, HE SWITCHED HIS ANGLE OF ATTACK, AIMING STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE TUNNELS IN THE HILL-SIDE.

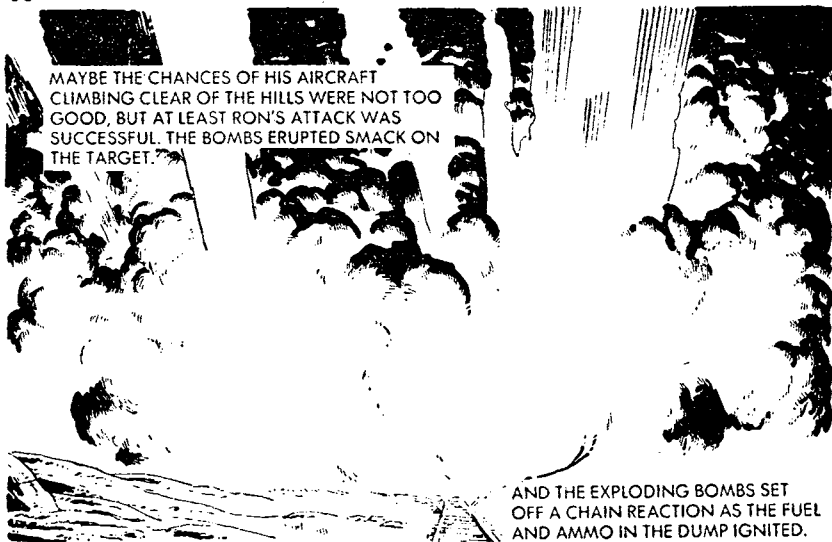
HANG ON,  
SIMON, THIS MIGHT  
PAY OFF...

IF NOT,  
WE'LL GO  
STRAIGHT INTO  
THE SIDE OF  
THE VALLEY!

RON HELD HIS COURSE UNTIL HE DARED NOT CONTINUE FOR A SECOND MORE. HE HAULED THE NOSE BACK ROUGHLY AS THE DEADLY BOMBS TUMBLED OUT INTO THE AIR. NOW IT WAS ALL UP TO FATE.

HOLD TIGHT,  
LADS, THIS COULD  
GET A BIT  
ROUGH!

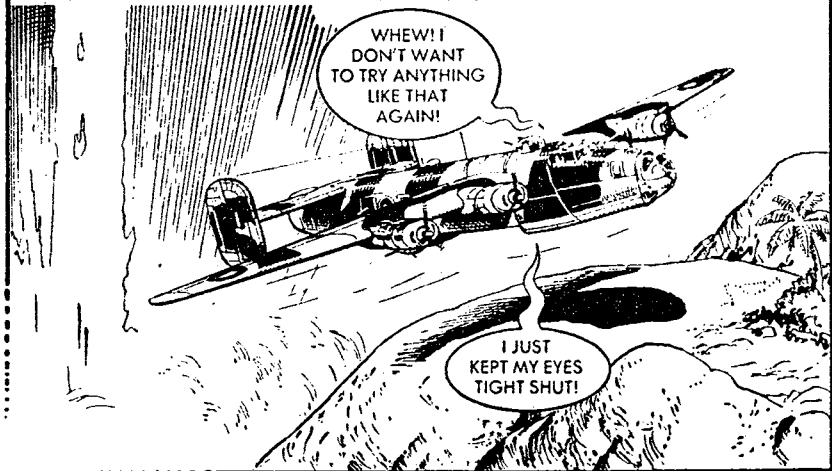
WHAT D'YOU  
MEAN COULD? IT  
ALREADY HAS...



MAYBE THE CHANCES OF HIS AIRCRAFT CLIMBING CLEAR OF THE HILLS WERE NOT TOO GOOD, BUT AT LEAST RON'S ATTACK WAS SUCCESSFUL. THE BOMBS ERUPTED SMACK ON THE TARGET.

AND THE EXPLODING BOMBS SET OFF A CHAIN REACTION AS THE FUEL AND AMMO IN THE DUMP IGNITED.

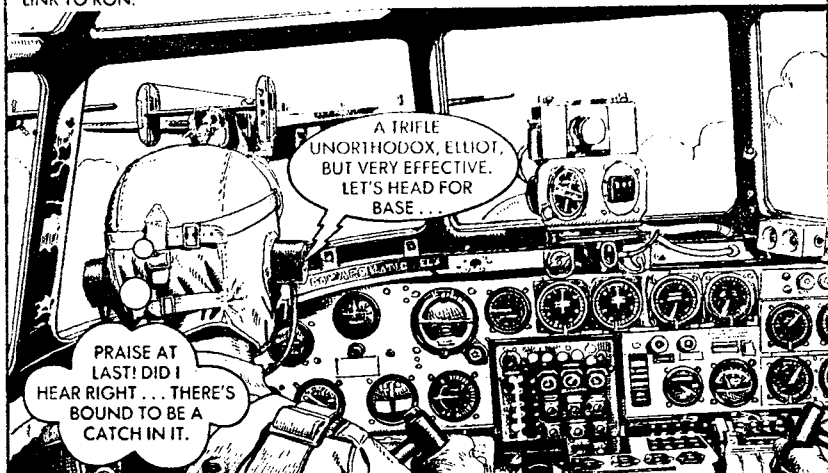
IT WAS TOUCH-AND-GO WHETHER THE LAST LIBERATOR WOULD SMASH INTO THE HILL-SIDE OR MAKE IT OVER THE CREST. THEY SCRAPED OVER WITH ONLY FEET TO SPARE, THE BOMBER SLAMMED HIGHER BY THE EXPLOSIONS ECHOING BELOW.



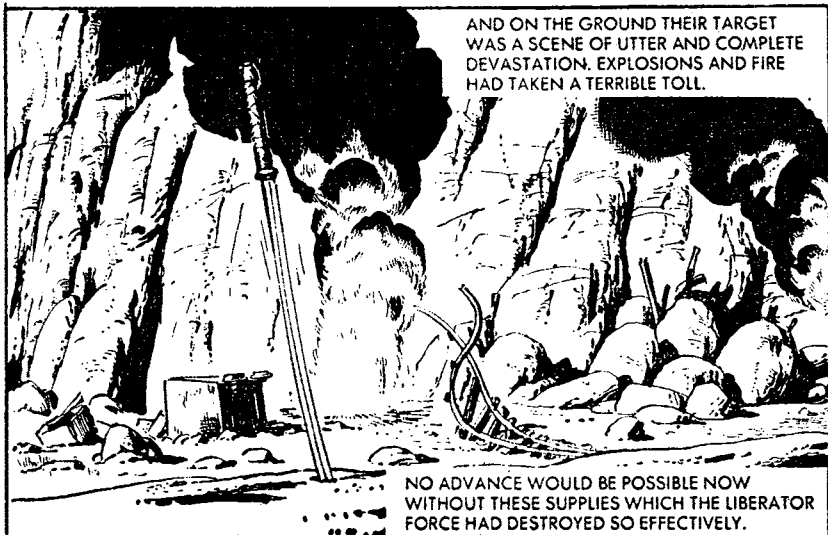
WHEW! I DON'T WANT TO TRY ANYTHING LIKE THAT AGAIN!

I JUST KEPT MY EYES TIGHT SHUT!

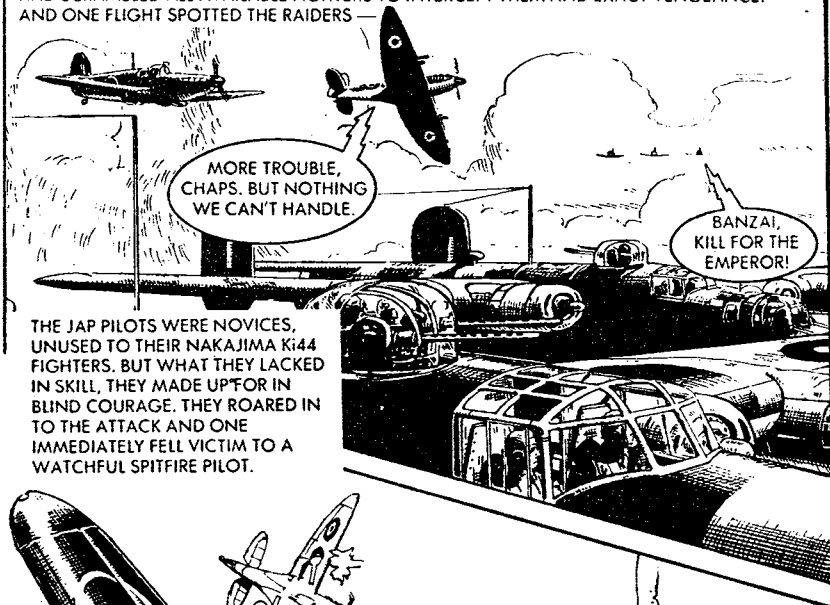
THE SURVIVING BOMBERS AND FIGHTERS, THEIR CREWS TIRED BUT ELATED, JOINED FORCES AGAIN AND HEADED FOR THEIR BASE. PRIOR'S CRISP VOICE CRACKLED OVER THE RADIO LINK TO RON.



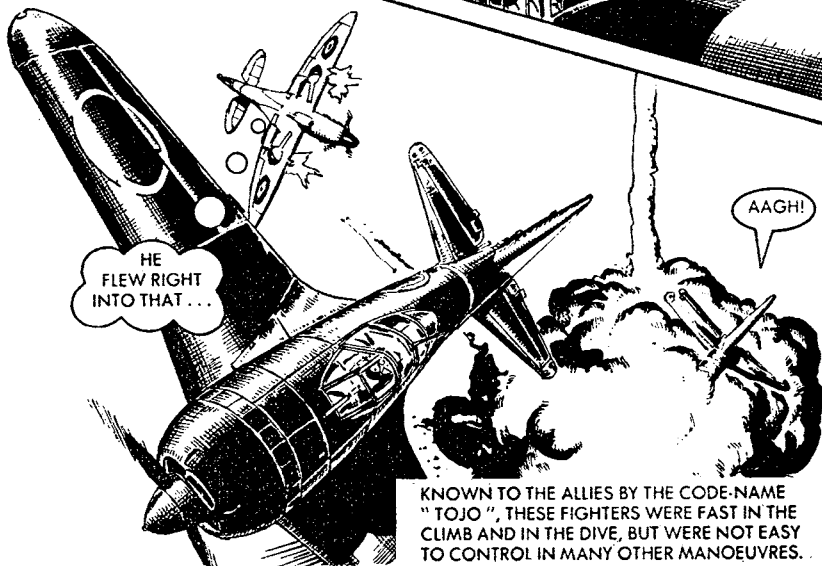
AND ON THE GROUND THEIR TARGET WAS A SCENE OF UTTER AND COMPLETE DEVASTATION. EXPLOSIONS AND FIRE HAD TAKEN A TERRIBLE TOLL.



THE BRITISH FORCE WAS WELL ON THE WAY HOME BY NOW, BUT THE FURIOUS JAPS HAD SCRAMBLED ALL AVAILABLE FIGHTERS TO INTERCEPT THEM AND EXACT VENGEANCE. AND ONE FLIGHT SPOTTED THE RAIDERS —

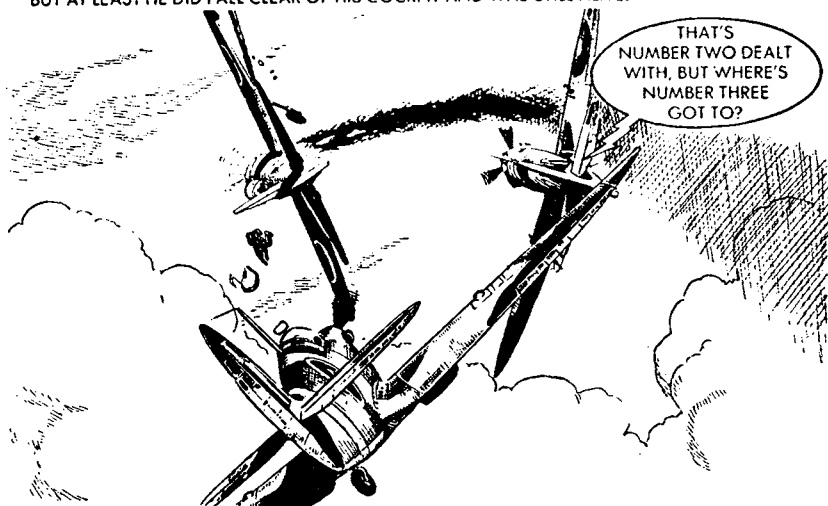


THE JAP PILOTS WERE NOVICES, UNUSED TO THEIR NAKAJIMA Ki44 FIGHTERS. BUT WHAT THEY LACKED IN SKILL, THEY MADE UP FOR IN BLIND COURAGE. THEY ROARED IN TO THE ATTACK AND ONE IMMEDIATELY FELL VICTIM TO A WATCHFUL SPITFIRE PILOT.

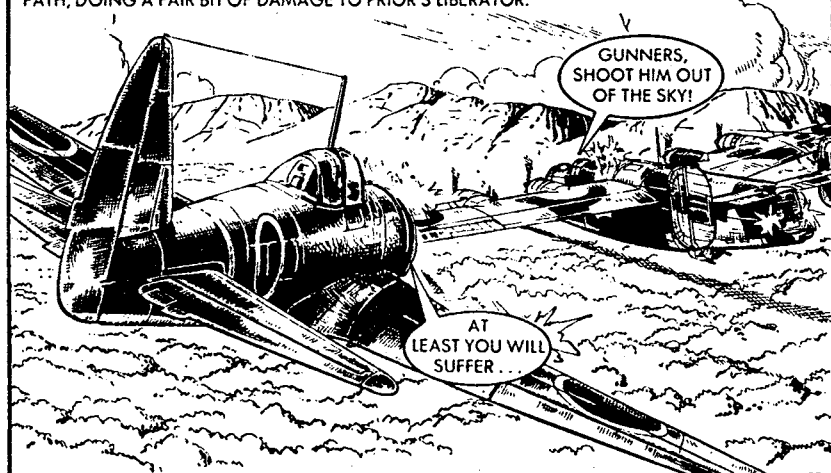


KNOWN TO THE ALLIES BY THE CODE-NAME "TOJO", THESE FIGHTERS WERE FAST IN THE CLIMB AND IN THE DIVE, BUT WERE NOT EASY TO CONTROL IN MANY OTHER MANOEUVRES.

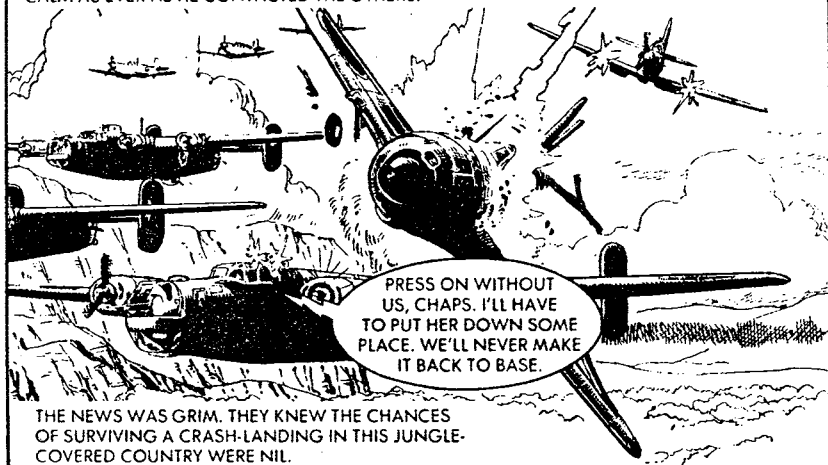
A SECOND JAP PILOT LASTED ONLY SECONDS LONGER BEFORE HIS AIRCRAFT WAS HIT. BUT AT LEAST HE DID FALL CLEAR OF HIS COCKPIT AND WAS STILL ALIVE.



THE THIRD ATTACKER HAD ACTUALLY MANAGED TO DODGE DOWN PAST THE ESCORT SCREEN AND HAD LUNGED AT THE FIRST BOMBER IN HIS PATH, DOING A FAIR BIT OF DAMAGE TO PRIOR'S LIBERATOR.

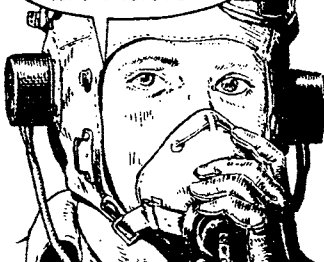


THAT LAST JAP PILOT WAS SOON DEALT WITH BY THE NEAREST SPITFIRE, BUT NOT BEFORE HE'D REALLY DAMAGED PRIOR'S AIRCRAFT. THE C.O.'S CRISP VOICE WAS AS CALM AS EVER AS HE CONTACTED THE OTHERS.



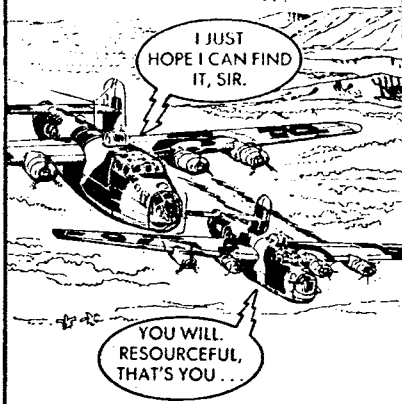
THE SILENCE WHICH FOLLOWED WAS BROKEN BY RON, AND AT FIRST ALL THE OTHERS THOUGHT HIM MAD.

HANG ON THERE, SKIPPER. LET THE OTHERS HEAD BACK AND I'LL GUIDE YOU TO A LANDING ZONE ... AT LEAST I HOPE I CAN.

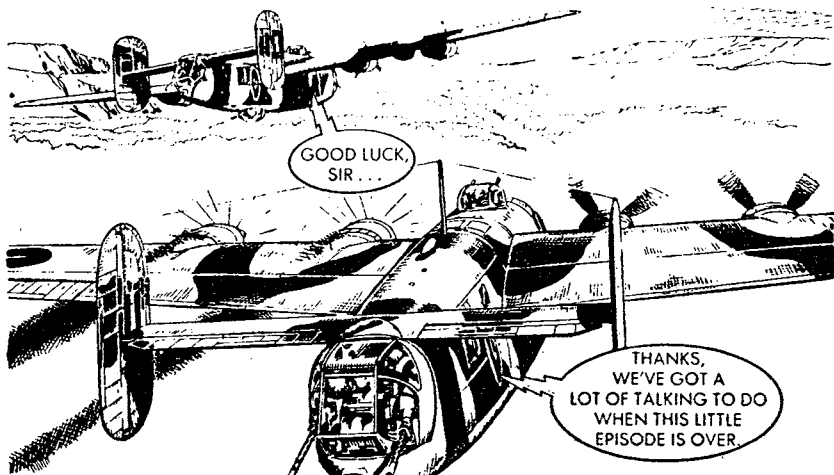


HIS PLAN HAD BEEN PROMPTED BY HIS DAKOTA EXPERIENCE, FLYING SUPPLY RUNS. AND IF HE WAS RIGHT, THERE WAS A ROUGH STRIP TO THE WEST.

PRIOR AGREED AT ONCE. ANY CHANCE WAS BETTER THAN NONE AND, WHILE ALL THE OTHERS HEADED BACK, RON LED PRIOR TO THE WEST.



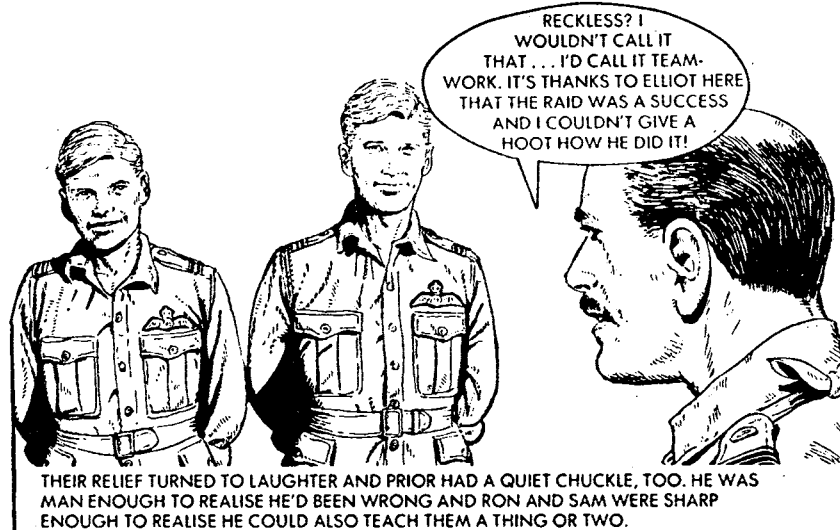
IT ONLY TOOK MINUTES FOR RON'S HUNCH TO PROVE CORRECT, BUT IT SEEMED LIKE HOURS. AND THAT WAS THE EASY BIT. NOW PRIOR HAD TO TRY AND GET HIS BOMBER DOWN IN ONE PIECE.



THE LIBERATOR DROPPED LIKE A STONE AND THE UNDERCARRIAGE COLLAPSED UNDER THE STRAIN WHEN PRIOR TOUCHED DOWN. THE STRICKEN AIRCRAFT SLID ALONG WITH THE RENDING SHRIEK OF METAL, TO THE ASTONISHMENT OF THE BRITISH TROOPS AT THE STRIP.

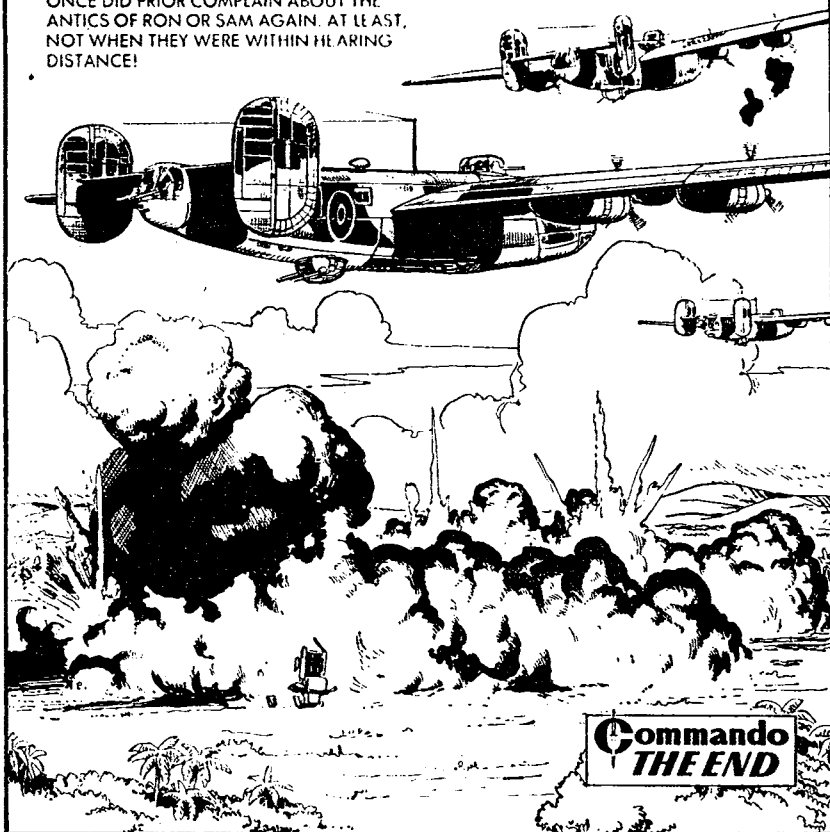


RON MADE HIS OWN WAY BACK TO BASE AND PRIOR WASN'T FAR BEHIND HIM. THEN ALL EXPLANATIONS HAD TO BE MADE AND RON AND SAM PREPARED TO FACE THE MUSIC, WITH SAM NOW FULLY FIT AGAIN.





AND TEAM-WORK WAS THE SQUADRON  
MOTTO FROM THEN UNTIL VICTORY AT LAST  
CAME. THEY WERE IN THE THICK OF IT  
RIGHT UP TO THE VERY END AND NEVER  
ONCE DID PRIOR COMPLAIN ABOUT THE  
ANTICS OF RON OR SAM AGAIN. AT LEAST,  
NOT WHEN THEY WERE WITHIN HEARING  
DISTANCE!



**Commando**  
**THE END**

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Stars of Athletics—Daley Thompson

# BOMBS GONE!

***THE*** Japanese fighter screamed in to attack the Blenheim — but suddenly the bomber dodged aside, leaving the astounded Jap to fire at thin air!

At the controls of the British aircraft was Sergeant Ron Elliot, a natural pilot who was an ace whatever plane he was flying.

The trouble was, he knew it. And his commanding officer knew it too . . . and didn't like it!

 **Commando**

